







POEMS

BY

ROBERT BROWNING



UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

DRAMAS

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

ALSO

POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

POEMS BY  
ROBERT BROWNING  
INCLUDING "DRAMATIC ROMANCES"  
& LYRICS, "PAULINE," "SORDELLO,"  
"MEN AND WOMEN," ETC.



LONDON:  
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LIMITED  
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL, E.C.  
MDCCCCIII



# CONTENTS

—O—

PAGE

## DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS :—

### CAVALIER TUNES :—

I. MARCHING ALONG . . . . .	11
II. GIVE A ROUSE . . . . .	12
III. BOOT AND SADDLE . . . . .	12
MY LAST DUCHESS . . . . .	13
COUNT GISMOND . . . . .	15
INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP . . . . .	18
SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER . . . . .	20
IN A GONDOLA . . . . .	22
ARTEMIS PROLOGUIZES . . . . .	28
WARING . . . . .	30
RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI . . . . .	37
CRISTINA . . . . .	38
I. MADHOUSE CELL . . . . .	40
II. MADHOUSE CELL . . . . .	41
THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR. . . . .	43
THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN . . . . .	44

	PAGE
DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS:—	
“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX” . . . . .	51
PICTOR IGNOTUS . . . . .	53
THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND . . . . .	55
THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY . . . . .	58
THE LOST LEADER . . . . .	65
THE LOST MISTRESS . . . . .	66
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD . . . . .	67
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA . . . . .	67
THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH . . . . .	68
GARDEN-FANCIES:—	
I. THE FLOWER'S NAME . . . . .	71
II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS . . . . .	72
THE LABORATORY . . . . .	74
THE CONFESSIONAL . . . . .	76
THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS . . . . .	78
EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES . . . . .	98
SONG . . . . .	99
THE BOY AND THE ANGEL . . . . .	99
MEETING AT NIGHT . . . . .	102
PARTING AT MORNING . . . . .	102
SAUL . . . . .	102
TIME'S REVENGES . . . . .	107
THE GLOVE . . . . .	108
CLARET AND TOKAY . . . . .	113
PAULINE . . . . .	115
CHRISTMAS EVE AND EASTER DAY . . . . .	141

# CONTENTS.

VII

PAGE

SORDELLO . . . . . 199

## MEN AND WOMEN :—

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS . . . . . 338

A LOVER'S QUARREL . . . . . 336

EVELYN HOPE . . . . . 340

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY . . . . . 342

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD . . . . . 345

\* FRA LIPPO LIPPI . . . . . 346

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S . . . . . 355

BY THE FIRE-SIDE . . . . . 357

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND . . . . . 366

AN EPISTLE . . . . . 371

MESMERISM . . . . . 378

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA . . . . . 383

MY STAR . . . . . 385

INSTANS TYRANNUS . . . . . 385

A PRETTY WOMAN . . . . . 388

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME” . . . . . 391

RESPECTABILITY . . . . . 398

A LIGHT WOMAN . . . . . 399

THE STATUE AND THE BUST . . . . . 401

LOVE IN A LIFE . . . . . 407

LIFE IN A LOVE . . . . . 408

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY . . . . . 409

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER . . . . . 411

THE PATRIOT . . . . . 415

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA . . . . . 416

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY . . . . . 421

	PAGE
MEN AND WOMEN :—	
MEMORABILIA . . . . .	443
ANDREA DEL SARTO . . . . .	444
BEFORE . . . . .	450
AFTER . . . . .	451
IN THREE DAYS . . . . .	452
IN A YEAR . . . . .	453
OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE . . . . .	456
IN A BALCONY . . . . .	464
SAUL . . . . .	492
“DE GUSTIBUS —” . . . . .	504
WOMEN AND ROSES . . . . .	505
PROTUS . . . . .	507
HOLY CROSS DAY . . . . .	508
THE GUARDIAN ANGEL . . . . .	513
CLEON . . . . .	515
THE TWINS . . . . .	522
POPULARITY . . . . .	524
THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY . . . . .	526
TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA . . . . .	529
A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL . . . . .	531
ONE WAY OF LOVE . . . . .	535
ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE . . . . .	536
“TRANSCENDENTALISM ” . . . . .	537
MISCONCEPTIONS . . . . .	538
ONE WORD MORE . . . . .	539

**Inscribed**

TO

**JOHN KENYON, ESQ.,**

IN THE HOPE THAT A RECOLLECTION OF HIS OWN SUCCESSFUL

“**RHYMED PLEA FOR TOLERANCE**”

MAY INDUCE HIM TO ADMIT GOOD-NATUREDLY THIS HUMBLER PROSE

ONE OF

HIS VERY GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

**R. B.**





# DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS.

---

## CAVALIER TUNES.\*

---

### I.—MARCHING ALONG.

#### I.

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folks droop,  
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen singing this song.

#### II.

God for King Charles. Pym and such carles  
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles !  
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,  
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup  
'Till you 're (*Chorus*) *marching along fifty-score strong*  
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

#### III.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell  
Serve Hazchrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well !  
England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !  
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here  
(*Cho.*) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*  
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song ?*

\* Such Poems as the following come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces"; being, though for the most part Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.

## IV.

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls  
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!  
 Hold by the right, you double your might;  
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

(Cho.) *March we along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

---

## II.—GIVE A ROUSE.

## I.

KING CHARLES, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse; here's, in Hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!

## II.

Who gave me the goods that went since?  
 Who raised me the house that sank once?  
 Who helped me to gold I spent since?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once?

(Cho.) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!*

## III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
 By the old fool's side that begot him?  
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,  
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(Cho.) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!*

---

## III.—BOOT AND SADDLE.

## I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
 Rescue my Castle, before the hot day  
 Brightens the blue from its silvery grey,

(Cho.) *"Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say ;  
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray  
" God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay,

(*Cho.*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads array :  
Who laughs, Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

(*Cho.*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

VI.

Who ? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,  
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, " Nay !  
" I've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?

(*Cho.*) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !*"

## MY LAST DUCHESS.

### FERRARA.

THAT 's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive ; I call  
That piece of wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will 't please you sit and look at her ? I said  
" Frà Pandolf " by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn from you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there ; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek ; perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say " Her mantle laps  
" Over my Lady's wrist too much," or " Paint  
" Must never hope to reproduce the faint

“ Half-flush that dies along her throat ; ” such stuff  
Was courtesy. she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart . . how shall I say ? . . too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed ; she liked whate’er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, ’twas all one ! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good ; but thanked  
Somehow . . I know not how . . as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine hundred years old name  
With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling ? Even had you skill  
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say “ Just this  
“ Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,  
“ Or there exceed the mark ”—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
—E’en then would be some stooping, and I chuse  
Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene’er I passed her ; but who passed without  
Much the same smile ? This grew ; I gave commands ;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will’t please you rise ? We’ll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your Master’s known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed ;  
Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go  
Together down, Sir ! Notice Neptune, tho,’  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.

---

# COUNT GISMOND.

## AIX IN PROVENCE.

### I.

CHRIST God, who savest men, save most  
Of men Count Gismond who saved me !  
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,  
Chose time and place and company  
To suit it ; when he struck at length  
My honour 'twas with all his strength.

### II.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw  
All points to one, he must have schemed !  
That miserable morning saw  
Few half so happy as I seemed,  
While being dressed in Queen's array  
To give our 'Tourney prize away.

### III.

I thought they loved me, did me grace  
To please themselves ; 'twas all their deed ;  
God makes, or fair or foul, our face ;  
If showing mine so caused to bleed  
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped  
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

### IV.

They, too, so beauteous ! Each a queen  
By virtue of her brow and breast ;  
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,  
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,  
Had either of them spoke, instead  
Of glancing sideways with still head !

### V.

But no : they let me laugh, and sing  
My birthday song quite through, adjust  
The last rose in my garland, fling  
A last look on the mirror, trust  
My arms to each an arm of theirs,  
And so descend the castle-stairs—

## VI.

And come out on the morning troop  
 Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,  
 And called me Queen, and made me stoop  
 Under the canopy--(a streak  
 That pierced it, of the outside sun,  
 Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun) --

## VII.

And they could let me take my state  
 And foolish throne amid applause  
 Of all come there to celebrate  
 My Queen's day—Oh, I think the cause  
 Of much was, they forgot no crowd  
 Makes up for parents in their shroud !

## VIII.

Howe'er that be, all eyes were bent  
 Upon me, when my cousins cast  
 Theirs down ; 'twas time I should present  
 The victor's crown, but . . there, 'twill last  
 No long time . . . the old mist again  
 Blinds me as then it did. How vain !

## IX.

See ! Gismond's at the gate, in talk  
 With his two boys : I can proceed.  
 Well, at that moment, who should stalk  
 Forth boldly (to my face, indeed)  
 But Gauthier, and he thundered " Stay ! "  
 And all stayed. " Bring no crowns, I say ! "

## X.

" Bring torches ! Wind the penance-sheet  
 " About her ! Let her shun the chaste,  
 " Or lay herself before their feet !  
 " Shall she whose body I embraced  
 " A night long, queen it in the day ?  
 " For Honour's sake no crowns, I say ! "

## XI.

I ? What I answered ? As I live,  
 I never fancied such a thing  
 As answer possible to give.  
 What says the body when they spring  
 Some monstrous torture-engine's whole  
 Strength on it ? No more says the soul.

XII.

Till out strode Gismond ; then I knew  
 That I was saved. I never met  
 His face before, but, at first view,  
 I felt quite sure that God had set  
 Himself to Satan ; who would spend  
 A minute's mistrust on the end ?

XIII.

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat  
 Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth  
 With one back-handed blow that wrote  
 In blood men's verdict there. North, South,  
 East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,  
 And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV.

This glads me most, that I enjoyed  
 The heart of the joy, with my content  
 In watching Gismond unalloyed  
 By any doubt of the event :  
 God took that on him—I was bid  
 Watch Gismond for my part : I did.

XV.

Did I not watch him while he let  
 His armourer just brace his greaves,  
 Rivet his hauberk, on the fret  
 The while ! His foot . . my memory leaves  
 No least stamp out, nor how anon  
 He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound  
 Was finished, prone lay the false Knight,  
 Prone as his lie, upon the ground :  
 Gismond flew at him, used no sleight  
 Of the sword, but open-breasted drove,  
 Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII.

Which done, he dragged him to my feet  
 And said " Here die, but end thy breath  
 " In full confession, lest thou fleet  
 " From my first, to God's second death !  
 " Say, hast thou lied ? " And, " I have lied  
 " To God and her," he said, and died.



## XVIII.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked  
 —What safe my heart holds, tho' no word  
 Could I repeat now, if I tasked  
 My powers for ever, to a third  
 Dear even as you are. Pass the rest  
 Until I sank upon his breast.

## XIX.

Over my head his arm he flung  
 Against the world; and scarce I felt  
 His sword, that dripped by me and swung,  
 A little shifted in its belt,—  
 For he began to say the while  
 How South our home lay many a mile.

## XX.

So 'mid the shouting multitude  
 We two walked forth to never more  
 Return. My cousins have pursued  
 Their life, untroubled as before  
 I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place  
 God lighten! May his soul find grace!

## XXI.

Our elder boy has got the clear  
 Great brow; tho' when his brother's black  
 Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?  
 And have you brought my tercel back?  
 I just was telling Adela  
 How many birds it struck since May.

## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

## I.

You know we French stormed Ratisbon:  
 A mile or so away  
 On a little mound, Napoléon  
 Stood on our storming-day;  
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
 As if to balance the prone brow  
 Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused " My plans  
 " That soar, to earth may fall,  
 " Let once my army-leader Lannes  
 " Waver at yonder wall,"—  
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
 A rider, bound on bound  
 Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew  
 Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
 And held himself erect  
 By just his horse's mane, a boy :  
 You hardly could suspect—  
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
 Scarce any blood came thro')  
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
 Was all but shot in two.

IV.

" Well," cried he, " Emperor, by God's grace  
 " We've got you Ratisbon !  
 " The Marshal's in the market-place,  
 " And you'll be there anon  
 " To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
 " Where I, to heart's desire,  
 " Perched him ! " The Chief's eye flashed ; his plans  
 Soared up again like fire.

V.

The Chief's eye flashed ; but presently  
 Softened itself, as sheathes  
 A film the mother eagle's eye  
 When her bruised eaglet breathes :  
 " You're wounded ! " " Nay," his soldier's pride  
 Touched to the quick, he said :  
 " I'm killed, Sire ! " And, his Chief beside,  
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

## SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER.

## I.

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence !  
 Water your damned flower-pots, do !  
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,  
 God's blood, would not mine kill you !  
 What, your myrtle-bush wants trimming ?  
 Oh, that rose has prior claims—  
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming ?  
 Hell dry you up with its flames !

## II.

At the meal we sit together :  
*Salve tibi !* I must hear  
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,  
 Sort of season, time of year :  
*Not a plenteous cork-crop : scarcely*  
*Dare we hope oak-gulls, I doubt :*  
*What's the Latin name for "parsely" ?*  
 What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout ?

## III.

Whew ! We 'll have our platter burnished,  
 Laid with care on our own shelf !  
 With a fire-new spoon we 're furnished,  
 And a goblet for ourself,  
 Rinsed like something sacrificial  
 Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps --  
 Marked with L. for our initial !  
 (He, he ! There his lily snaps !)

## IV.

*Saint*, forsooth ! While brown Dolores  
 Squats outside the Convent bank,  
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,  
 Steeping tresses in the tank,  
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,  
 —Can't I see his dead eye glow  
 Bright, as 'twere a Barbary corsair's ?  
 (That is, if he 'd let it show !)

## V.

When he finishes refection,  
 Knife and fork he never lays  
 Cross-w'se to my recollection,  
 As do I, in Jesu's praise.

I, the Trinity illustrate,  
 Drinking watered orange-pulp—  
 In three sips the Arian frustrate ;  
 While he drains his at one gulp !

VI.

Oh, those melons ! If he 's able  
 We 're to have a feast ; so nice !  
 One goes to the Abbot's table,  
 All of us get each a slice.  
 How go on your flowers ? None double ?  
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy ?  
 Strange !—And I, too, at such trouble,  
 Keep 'em close-nipped on the sly !

VII.

There 's a great text in Galatians,  
 Once you trip on it, entails  
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations  
 One sure, if another fails.  
 If I trip him just a-dying,  
 Sure of Heaven as sure can be,  
 Spin him round and send him flying  
 Off to Hell, a Manichee ?

VIII.

Or, my scrofulous French novel,  
 On grey paper with blunt type !  
 Simply glance at it, you grovel  
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe :  
 If I double down its pages  
 At the woeful sixteenth print,  
 When he gathers his greengages,  
 Ope a sieve and slip it in 't ?

IX.

Or there 's Satan !—one might venture  
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave  
 Such a flaw in the indenture  
 As he 'd miss till, past retrieve,  
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia  
 We 're so proud of ! *Hy, Zy, Hine . . .*  
 'St, there 's Vespers ! *Plena gratia*  
*Ave, Virgo !* Gr-r-r—you swine !

## IN A GONDOLA.

*He sings.*

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart  
 In this my singing !  
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears part ;  
 The very night is clinging  
 Closér to 'Venice' streets to leave one space  
 Above me, whence thy face  
 May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling place.

*She speaks.*

Say after me, and try to say  
 My very words, as if each word  
 Came from you of your own accord,  
 In your own voice, in your own way :  
 " This woman's heart, and soul, and brain  
 " Are mine as much as this gold chain  
 " She bids me wear ; which " (say again)  
 " I choose to make by cherishing  
 " A precious thing, or choose to fling  
 " Over the boat-side, ring by ring."  
 And yet once more say . . . no word more !  
 Since words are only words. Give o'er !  
 Unless you call me, all the same,  
 Familiarly by my pet-name  
 Which, if the 'Three should hear you call,  
 And me reply to, would proclaim  
 At once our secret to them all :  
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—  
 Do break down the partition-wall  
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds  
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.  
 What 's left but—all of me to take ?  
 I am the 'Three's ; prevent them, slake  
 Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage  
 In practising with gems can loose  
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce  
 And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,  
 Leave them my ashes when thy use  
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

*He sings.*

1.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 What 's that poor Agnese doing  
 Where they make the shutters fast ?  
 Grey Zanobi 's just a-wooing  
 To his couch the purchased bride :  
 Past we glide !

2.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 Why 's the Pucci Palace flaring  
 Like a beacon to the blast ?  
 Guests by hundreds—not one caring  
 If the dear host's neck were wried :  
 Past we glide !

*She sings.*

1.

The Moth's kiss, first !  
 Kiss me as if you made believe  
 You were not sure, this eve,  
 How my face, your flower, had pursed  
 Its petals up ; so, here and there  
 You brush it, till I grow aware  
 Who wants me, and wide open burst.

2.

The Bee's kiss, now !  
 Kiss me as if you entered gay  
 My heart at some noonday,  
 A bud that dares not disallow  
 The claim, so all is rendered up,  
 And passively its shattered cup  
 Over your head to sleep I bow.

*He sings.*

1.

What are we two ?  
 I am a Jew,  
 And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,  
 To a feast of our tribe,  
 Where they need thee to bribe  
 The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe  
 Thy . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And now.  
 As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

## 2.

Say again, what we are ?  
 The sprite of a star,  
 I lure thee above where the Destinies bar  
 My plumes their full play  
 Till a ruddier ray  
 Than my pale one announce there is withering away  
 Some . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And now,  
 As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

*He muses.*

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?  
 The land's lap or the water's breast ?  
 To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
 Or swim in lucid shallows, just  
 Eluding water-lily leaves,  
 An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust  
 To lock you, whom release he must ;  
 Which life were best on Summer eves ?

*He speaks, musing.*

Lie back ; could thought of mine improve you ?  
 From this shoulder let there spring  
 A wing ; from this, another wing ;  
 Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you .  
 Snow-white must they spring, to blend  
 With your flesh, but I intend  
 They shall deepen to the end,  
 Broader, into burning gold,  
 Till both wings crescent-wise enfold  
 Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet  
 To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet  
 As if a million sword-blades hurled  
 Defiance from you to the world !

Rescue me thou, the only real !  
 And scare away this mad Ideal  
 That came, nor motions to depart !  
 Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art .

*Still he muses.*

## 1.

What if the Three should catch at last  
 Thy serenader ? While there 's cast  
 Paul's cloak about my head, and fast  
 Gian pinions me, Himself has past  
 His stylet thro' my back ; I reel ;  
 And . . . is it Thou I feel ?

2.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,  
Past every church that sains and saves,  
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves  
By Lido's wet accursed graves,  
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,  
And . . . on Thy breast I sink !

*She replies, musing.*

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,  
As I do : thus : were Death so unlike Sleep,  
Caught this way ? Death 's to fear from flame, or steel.  
Or poison doubtless ; but from water—feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ? There !  
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass  
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,  
I flung away : since you have praised my hair,  
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

*He speaks.*

Row home ? must we row home ? Too surely  
Know I where its front 's demurely  
Over the Giudecca piled ;  
Window just with window mating,  
Door on door exactly waiting,  
All 's the set face of a child :  
But behind it, where 's a trace  
Of the staidness and reserve,  
And formal lines without a curve,  
In the same child's playing-face ?  
No two windows look one way  
O'er the small sea-water thread  
Below them. Ah, the autumn day  
I, passing, saw you overhead !  
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,  
Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you—  
To catch your loory that must needs  
Escape just then, of all times then,  
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,  
And make me happiest of men.  
I scarce could breathe to see you reach  
So far back o'er the balcony,  
(To catch him ere he climbed too high  
Above you in the Smyrna peach)  
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,  
'This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,



Fell down you like a gorgeous snake  
 The Roman girls were wont, of old,  
 When Rome there was, for coolness' sake  
 To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.  
 Dear loory, may his beak retain  
 Ever its delicate rose stain  
 As if the wounded lotus-blossoms  
 Had marked their thief to know again !

Stay longer yet, for others' sake  
 Than mine ! what should your chamber do ?  
 —With all its rarities that ache  
 In silence while day lasts, but wake  
 At night-time and their life renew,  
 Suspended just to pleasure you  
 —That brought against their will together  
 These objects, and, while day lasts, weave  
 Around them such a magic tether  
 That they look dumb : your harp, believe,  
 With all the sensitive tight strings  
 That dare not speak, now to itself  
 Breathes slumbrously as if some elf  
 Went in and out the chords, his wings  
 Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,  
 As an angel may, between the maze  
 Of midnight palace-pillars, on  
 And on, to sow God's plagues have gone  
 Through guilty glorious Babylon.  
 And while such murmurs flow, the nymph  
 Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell,  
 As the dry limpet for the lymph  
 Come with a tune he knows so well.  
 And how your statues' hearts must swell !  
 And how your pictures must descend  
 To see each other, friend with friend !  
 Oh, could you take them by surprise,  
 You 'd find Schidone's eager Duke  
 Doing the quaintest courtesies  
 To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke :  
 And, deeper into her rock den,  
 Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen  
 You 'd find retreated from the ken  
 Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser--  
 As if the Tizian thinks of her,  
 And is not, rather, gravely bent  
 On seeing for himself what toys  
 Are these, his progeny invent,  
 What litter now the board employs

Whereon he signed a document  
That got him murdered ! Each enjoys  
Its night so well, you cannot break  
The sport up, so, indeed must make  
More stay with me, for others' sake.

*She speaks.*

1.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,  
Is used to tie the jasmine back  
That overflows my room with sweets,  
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets  
My Zanze : if the ribbon's black,  
The Three are watching ; keep away.

2

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath  
A mesh of water-weeds about  
Its prow, as if he unaware  
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair  
That I may throw a paper out  
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper ; safe are we !  
Only one minute more to-night with me ?  
Resume your past self of a month ago !  
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be  
The lady with the colder breast than snow :  
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand  
More than I touch yours when I step to land,  
And say, All thanks, Siora !—

Heart to heart.

And lips to lips ! Yet once more, ere we part,  
Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine thou art !

*He is surprised, and stabbed.*

It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and best  
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on thy breast.  
Still kiss me ! Care not for the cowards ! Care  
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair  
My blood will hurt ! The Three, I do not scorn  
To death, because they never lived : but I  
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—can die !

## ARTEMIS PROLOGUIZES.

I AM a Goddess of the ambrosial courts,  
 And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed  
 By none whose temples whiten this the world.  
 Thro' Heaven I roll my lucid moon along ;  
 I shed in Hell o'er my pale people peace ;  
 On Earth, I, caring for the creatures, guard  
 Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,  
 And every feathered mother's callow brood,  
 And all that love green haunts and loneliness.  
 Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns  
 Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,  
 Upon my image at Athenai here ;  
 And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above,  
 Was dearest to me. He my buskined step  
 To follow thro' the wild-wood leafy ways,  
 And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts  
 Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low,  
 Neglected homage to another God :  
 Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke  
 Of tapers lulled, in jealousy dispatched  
 A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings,  
 Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself  
 The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.  
 Hippolutos exclaiming in his rage  
 Against the miserable Queen, she judged  
 Life insupportable, and, pricked at heart  
 An Amazonian stranger's race should dare  
 To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord :  
 Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll  
 The fame of him her swerving made not swerve,  
 Which Theseus read, returning, and believed,  
 So, exiled in the blindness of his wrath,  
 The man without a crime, who, last as first,  
 Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.  
 Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained  
 That of his wishes should be granted Three  
 And this he imprecated straight—alive  
 May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands !  
 Poseidon heard, ai ai ! And scarce the prince  
 Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car,  
 That give the feet a stay against the strength

Of the Henetian horses, and around  
 His body flung the reins, and urged their speed  
 Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,  
 When from the gaping wave a monster flung  
 His obscene body in the coursers' path !  
 These, mad with terror as the sea-bull sprawled  
 Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him  
 That reared them ; and the master-chariot-pole  
 Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,  
 Hippolotos, whose feet were trammelled fast,  
 Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein  
 Which either hand directed ; nor was quenched  
 The frenzy of that flight before each trace,  
 Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,  
 Each boulder-stone, sharp stub, and spiny shell,  
 Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands  
 On that detested beach, was bright with blood  
 And morsels of his flesh : then fell the steeds  
 Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,  
 Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.  
 His people, who had witnessed all afar,  
 Bore back the ruins of Hippolotos.  
 But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced,  
 (Indomitable as a man foredoomed)  
 That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,  
 I, in a flood of glory visible,  
 Stood o'er my dying votary, and deed  
 By deed revealed, as all took place, the truth.  
 Then Theseus lay the woofullest of men.  
 And worthily ; but ere the death-veils hid  
 His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed  
 To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.  
 So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,  
 Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake  
 Should tender, not pour out the dog's hot life ;  
 Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate  
 Should dress my image with some faded poor  
 Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object  
 Such slackness to my worshippers who turn  
 The trusting heart and loaded hand elsewhere,  
 As they had climbed Oulumpas to report  
 Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—  
 I interposed : and, this eventful night,  
 While round the funeral pyre the populace  
 Stood with fierce light on their black robes that blind  
 Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped  
 O'er the dead body of their withered prince,  
 And, in his palace. Theseus prostrated

On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab  
 'Twas bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—  
 As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed,  
 Sending a crowd of 'sparkles thro' the night,  
 And the gay fire, elate with mastery,  
 Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars  
 Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,  
 And splendid gums, like gold,—my potency  
 Conveyed the perished man to my retreat  
 In the thrice venerable forest here.  
 And this white-bearded Sage who squeezes now  
 The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,  
 Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught  
 The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,  
 To know their secret'st virtue and express  
 The saving soul of all—who so has soothed  
 With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,  
 Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,  
 And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,  
 And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh  
 Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot  
 Of every tortured limb—that now he lies  
 As if mere sleep possessed him underneath  
 These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh, cheer,  
 Divine presenter of the healing rod  
 Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,  
 Twines his lithe spires around ! I say, much cheer !  
 Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies !  
 And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,  
 Ply, as the Sage directs, these buds and leaves  
 That strew the turf around the Twain ! While I  
 Await, in fitting silence, the event.

---

## WARING.

---

I.

I.

WHAT 's become of Waring  
 Since he gave us all the slip,  
 Chose land-travel or seafaring,  
 Boots and chest, or staff and scrip,  
 Rather than pace up and down  
 Any longer London-town ?

II.

Who 'd have guessed it from his lip,  
 Or his brow's accustomed bearing,  
 On the night he thus took ship,  
 Or started landward?—little caring  
 For us, it seems, who supped together.  
 (Friends of his too, I remember)  
 And walked home thro' the merry weather,  
 The snowiest in all December;  
 I left his arm that night myself  
 For what 's-his-name's the new prose-poet,  
 That wrote the book there, on the shelf—  
 How, forsooth, was I to know it  
 If Waring meant to glide away  
 Like a ghost at break of day?  
 Never looked he half so gay!

III.

He was prouder than the Devil:  
 How he must have cursed our revel!  
 Ay, and many other meetings,  
 Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,  
 As up and down he paced this London,  
 With no work done, but great works undone,  
 Where scarce twenty knew his name.  
 Why not, then, have earlier spoken,  
 Written, bustled? Who's to blame  
 If your silence kept unbroken?  
 "True, but there were sundry jottings,  
 "Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,  
 "Certain first steps were achieved  
 "Already which"—(is that your meaning?)  
 "Had well borne out who'er believed  
 "In more to come!" But who goes gleaning  
 Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved  
 Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening  
 Pride alone, puts forth such claims  
 O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV.

Meantime, how much I loved him,  
 I find out now I've lost him:  
 I, who cared not if I moved him,  
 Who could so carelessly accost him,  
 Henceforth never shall get free  
 Of his ghostly company,  
 His eyes that just a little wink  
 As deep I go into the merit

Of this and that distinguished spirit—  
 His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,  
 As long I dwell on some stupendous  
 And tremendous (Heaven defend us !)  
 Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous  
 Demoniaco-seraphic  
 Penman's latest piece of graphic.  
 Nay, my very wrist grows warm  
 With his dragging weight of arm !  
 E'en so, swimmingly appears,  
 Thro' one's after-supper musings,  
 Some lost Lady of old years,  
 With her beauteous vain endeavour,  
 And goodness unrepaid as ever ;  
 The face, accustomed to refusings,  
 We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never  
 Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled  
 Being aught like false, forsooth, to ?  
 Telling aught but honest truth to ?  
 What a sin, had we centupled  
 Its possessor's grace and sweetness !  
 No ! she heard in its completeness  
 Truth, for truth 's a weighty matter,  
 And, truth at issue, we can't flatter !  
 Well, 'tis done with : she 's exempt  
 From damning us thro' such a sally ;  
 And so she glides, as down a valley,  
 Taking up with her contempt,  
 Past our reach ; and in, the flowers  
 Shut her unregarded hours.

## v.

Oh, could I have him back once more,  
 This Waring, but one half-day more !  
 Back, with the quiet face of yore,  
 So hungry for acknowledgment  
 Like mine ! I'd fool him to his bent !  
 Feed, should not he, to heart's content ?  
 I'd say, " to only have conceived  
 " Your great works, tho' they ne'er make progress,  
 " Surpasses all we've yet achieved ! "  
 I'd lie so, I should be believed.  
 I'd make such havoc of the claims  
 Of the day's distinguished names  
 To feast him with, as feasts an ogress  
 Her sharp-toothed golden-crowned child !  
 Or, as one feasts a creature rarely

Captured here, unreconciled  
To capture ; and completely gives  
Its pettish humours licence, barely  
Requiring that it lives. •

VI.

Ichabod, Ichabod,  
The glory is departed !  
Travels Waring East away ?  
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,  
Reports a man upstarted  
Somewhere as a God,  
Hordes grown European-hearted,  
Millions of the wild made tame  
On a sudden at his fame ?  
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?  
Or who, in Moscow, toward the Czar,  
With the demurest of footfalls  
Over the Kremlin's pavement, bright  
With serpentine and syenite,  
Steps, with five other Generals,  
That simultaneously take snuff,  
For each to have pretext enough  
To kerchiefwise unfurl his sash  
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff  
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,  
And leave the grand white neck no gash ?  
Waring, in Moscow, to those rough  
Cold northern natures borne, perhaps,  
Like the lambwhite maiden dear  
From the circle of mute kings,  
Unable to repress the tear,  
Each as his sceptre down he flings,  
To Dian's fane at Taurica,  
Where now a captive priestess, she alway  
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech  
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach,  
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands  
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands  
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry  
Amid their barbarous twitter !  
In Russia ? Never ! Spain were fitter !  
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain  
That we and Waring meet again—  
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane  
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid  
All fire and shine—abrupt as when there's slid  
Its stiff gold blazing pall



From some black coffin-lid.  
 Or, best of all,  
 I love to think  
 The leaving us was just a feint ;  
 Back here to London did he slink ;  
 And now works on without a wink  
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink  
 Of something great in fresco-paint  
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,  
 Up and down and o'er and o'er  
 He splashes, as none splashed before  
 Since great Caldara Polidore :  
 Or Music means this land of ours  
 Some favour yet, to pity won  
 By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—  
 " Give me my so long promised son,  
 " Let Waring end what I begun ! "  
 Then down he creeps and out he steals  
 Only when the night conceals  
 His face—in Kent 'tis cherry-time,  
 Or, hops are picking ; or, at prime  
 Of March, he wanders as, too happy,  
 Years ago when he was young,  
 Some mild eve when woods grew sappy,  
 And the early moths had sprung  
 To life from many a trembling sheath  
 Woven the warm boughs beneath ;  
 While small birds said to themselves  
 What should soon be actual song,  
 And young gnats, by tens and twelves,  
 Made as if they were the throng  
 That crowd around and carry aloft  
 The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure  
 Out of a myriad noises soft,  
 Into a tone that can endure  
 Amid the noise of a July noon,  
 When all God's creatures crave their boon,  
 All at once and all in tune,  
 And get it, happy as Waring then,  
 Having first within his ken  
 What a man might do with men,  
 And far too glad, in the even-glow,  
 To mix with your world he meant to take  
 Into his hand he told you, so—  
 And out of it his world to make,  
 To contract and to expand  
 As he shut or oped his hand.  
 Oh, Waring, what's to really be ?

A clear stage and a crowd to see!  
 Some Garrick—say—out shall not he  
 The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck'  
 Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,  
 Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck  
 His sleeve, and out with flaying-knife!  
 Some Chatterton shall have the luck  
 Of calling Rowley into life!  
 Some one shall somehow run a muck  
 With this old world, for want of strife  
 Sound asleep: contrive, contrive  
 To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?  
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now:  
 Distinguished names!—but 'tis, somehow.  
 As if they played at being names  
 Still more distinguished, like the games  
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest  
 With a visage of the sternest!  
 Bring the real times back, confessed  
 Still better than our very best!

---

II.

I.

“WHEN I last saw Waring . . .”  
 (How all turned to him who spoke—  
 You saw Waring? Truth or joke?  
 In land-travel, or seafaring?—

II.

“We were sailing by Triest,  
 “Where a day or two we harboured:  
 “A sunset was in the West,  
 “When, looking over the vessel's side,  
 “One of our company espied  
 “A sudden speck to larboard.  
 “And, as a sea-duck flies and swims  
 “At once, so came the light craft up,  
 “With its sole lateen sail that trims  
 “And turns (the water round its rims  
 “Dancing, as round a sinking cup)  
 “And by us like a fish it curled,  
 “And drew itself up close beside,  
 “Its great sail on the instant furled,  
 “And o'er its planks, a shrill voice cried,

“ (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar’s)  
 “ ‘Buy wine of us, you English Brig?  
 “ ‘Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?  
 “ ‘A Pilot for you to Triest?  
 “ ‘Without one, look you ne’er so big,  
 “ ‘They’ll never let you up the bay!  
 “ ‘We natives should know best.’  
 “ I turned, and ‘just those fellows’ way,’  
 “ Our captain said, ‘The ‘long-shore thieves  
 “ ‘Are laughing at us in their sleeves.’

## III.

“ In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;  
 “ And one, half-hidden by his side  
 “ Under the furled sail, soon I spied,  
 “ With great grass hat, and kerchief black,  
 “ Who looked up, with his kingly throat,  
 “ Said somewhat, while the other shook  
 “ His hair back from his eyes to look  
 “ Their longest at us; then the boat,  
 “ I know not how, turned sharply round,  
 “ Laying her whole side on the sea  
 “ As a leaping fish does; from the lee  
 “ Into the weather, cut somehow  
 “ Her sparkling path beneath our bow;  
 “ And so went off, as with a bound,  
 “ Into the rose and golden half  
 “ Of the sky, to overtake the sun,  
 “ And reach the shore, like the sea-calf  
 “ Its singing cave; yet I caught one  
 “ Glance ere away the boat quite passed,  
 “ And neither time nor toil could mar  
 “ Those features: so I saw the last  
 “ Of Waring!”—You? Oh, never star  
 Was lost here, but it rose afar!  
 Look East, where whole new thousands are!  
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

# RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI.

## I.

I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives  
First when he visits, last, too, when he leaves  
The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays  
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze  
By no change of its large calm front of snow.  
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,  
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever  
At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour  
To live his life, has parted, one by one,  
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace  
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,  
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.  
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount,  
As over many a land of theirs its large  
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe  
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh ones vie,  
Each to its proper praise and own account:  
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

## II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look  
Across the waters to this twilight nook,  
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

## III.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?  
Go! Saying ever as thou dost proceed,  
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device  
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice  
Before its idol. See! These inexpert  
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt  
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill  
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill  
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed  
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees  
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:  
But, as the flower's concern is not for these  
But solely for the sun, so men applaud  
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here  
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear:

## CRISTINA.

## I.

SHE should never have looked at me,  
 If she meant I should not love her!  
 There are plenty . . men, you call such,  
 I suppose . . she may discover  
 All her soul to, if she pleases,  
 And yet leave much as she found them:  
 But I'm not so, and she knew it  
 When she fixed me, glancing round them.

## II.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?  
 But I can't tell . . there's my weakness . .  
 What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,  
 About "need to strew the bleakness  
 "Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,  
 "That the Sea feels"—no "strange yearning  
 "That such souls have, most to lavish  
 "Where there's chance of least returning."

## III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!  
 But not quite so sunk that moments,  
 Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,  
 When the spirit's true endowments  
 Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
 And apprise it if pursuing  
 Or the right way or the wrong way,  
 To its triumph or undoing.

## IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
 There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
 Whereby piled-up honours perish,  
 Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,  
 While just this or that poor impulse,  
 Which for once had play unstifled,  
 Seems the sole work of a life-time  
 That away the rest have trifled.

V.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,  
 As she fixed me, she felt clearly,  
 Ages past the soul existed,  
 Here an age 'tis resting merely,  
 And hence, fleets again for ages :  
 While the true end, sole and single,  
 It stops here for is, this love-way,  
 With some other soul to mingle ?

VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,  
 And eternally must lose it ;  
 Better ends may be in prospect,  
 Deeper blisses, if you choose it,  
 But this life's end and this love-bliss  
 Have been lost here. Doubt you whether  
 This she felt, as, looking at me,  
 Mine and her soul rushed together ?

VII.

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,  
 The world's honours, in derision,  
 Trampled out the light for ever :  
 Never fear but there's provision  
 Of the Devil's to quench knowledge  
 Lest we walk the earth in rapture !  
 —Making those who catch God's secret  
 Just so much more prize their capture.

VIII.

Such am I : the secret's mine now !  
 She has lost me—I have gained her !  
 Her soul's mine : and, thus, grown perfect,  
 I shall pass my life's remainder,  
 Life will just hold out the proving  
 Both our powers, alone and blended—  
 And then, come the next life quickly !  
 This world's use will have been ended.

## I.—MADHOUSE CELL.

## JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION.

THERE 's Heaven above, and night by night,  
 I look right thro' its gorgeous roof ;  
 No suns and moons, tho' e'er so bright,  
 Avail to stop me ; splendour-proof,  
 I keep the broods of stars aloof :  
 For I intend to get to God,  
 For 'tis to God I speed so fast,  
 For in God's breast, my own abode,  
 Those shoals of dazzling glory past,  
 I lay my spirit down at last  
 I lie where I have always lain,  
 God smiles as he has always smiled ;  
 Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,  
 Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled  
 The Heavens, God thought on me his child ;  
 Ordained a life for me, arrayed  
 Its circumstances, every one  
 To the minutest ; ay, God said  
 This head this hand should rest upon  
 Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.  
 And having thus created me,  
 Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,  
 Guiltless for ever, like a tree  
 That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know  
 The law by which it prospers so :  
 But sure that thought and word and deed  
 All go to swell his love for me,  
 Me, made because that love had need  
 Of something irrevocably  
 Pledged solely its content to be.  
 Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,—  
 No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop !  
 I have God's warrant, could I blend  
 All hideous sins, as in a cup,  
 To drink the mingled venoms up,  
 Secure my nature will convert  
 The draught to blossoming gladness fast,  
 While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,  
 And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,  
 As from the first its lot was cast.

For as I lie, 'smiled on, full fed  
 By unexhausted power to bless,  
 I gaze below on Hell's fierce bed,  
 And those its waves of flame oppress,  
 Swarming in ghastly wretchedness ;  
 Whose life on earth aspired to be  
 One altar-smoke, so pure !—to win  
 If not love like God's love to me,  
 At least to keep his anger in,  
 And all their striving turned to sin !  
 Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white  
 With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,  
 The martyr, the wan acolyte,  
 The incense-swinging child,—undone  
 Before God fashioned star or sun !  
 God, whom I praise ; how could I praise,  
 If such as I might understand,  
 Make out, and reckon on, his ways,  
 And bargain for his love, and stand,  
 Paying a price, at his right hand ?

---

## II.—MADHOUSE CELL.

### PORPHYRIA'S LOVER.

THE rain set early in to-night,  
 The sullen wind was soon awake,  
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
 And did its worst to vex the lake,  
 I listened with heart fit to break ;  
 When glided in Porphyria : straight  
 She shut the cold out and the storm,  
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm ;  
 Which done, she rose, and from her form  
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
 And, last, she sate down by my side  
 And called me. When no voice replied,  
 She put my arm about her waist,  
 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,  
 And all her yellow hair displaced,  
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
 And spread o'er all her yellow hair,



Murmuring how she loved me ; she  
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,  
To set its struggling passion free  
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,  
And give herself to me for ever :  
But passion sometimes would prevail,  
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain  
A sudden thought of one so pale  
For love of her, and all in vain ;  
So, she was come thro' wind and rain.  
Be sure I looked up at her eyes  
Proud, very proud ; at last I knew  
Porphyria worshipped me ; surprise  
Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
While I debated what to do.  
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
Perfectly pure and good : I found  
A thing to do, and all her hair  
In one long yellow string I wound  
Three times her little throat around,  
And strangled her. No pain felt she ;  
I am quite sure she felt no pain.  
As a shut bud that holds a bee  
I warily oped her lids ; again  
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
And I untightened next the tress  
About her neck ; her cheek once more  
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss :  
I propped her head up as before,  
Only, this time *my* shoulder bore  
Her head, which droops upon it still :  
The smiling rosy little head,  
So glad it has its utmost will,  
That all it scorned at once is fled,  
And I, its love, am gained instead !  
Porphyria's love : she guessed not how  
Her darling one wish would be heard.  
And thus we sit together now,  
And all night long we have not stirred,  
And yet God has not said a word !

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR.

1842.

---

I.

As I ride, as I ride,  
 With a full heart for my guide,  
 So its tide rocks my side,  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 That, as I were double-eyed,  
 He, in whom our Tribes confide,  
 Is descried, ways untried  
 As I ride, as I ride.

II.

As I ride, as I ride  
 To our Chief and his Allied,  
 Who dares chide my heart's pride  
 As I ride, as I ride ?  
 Or are witnesses denied—  
 Through the desert waste and wide  
 Do I glide unespied  
 As I ride, as I ride ?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,  
 When an inner voice has cried,  
 The sands slide, nor abide  
 (As I ride, as I ride)  
 O'er each visioned Homicide  
 That came vaunting (has he lied ?)  
 To reside—where he died,  
 As I ride, as I ride.

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,  
 Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,  
 Yet his hide, streaked and pied,  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,  
 —Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—  
 How has vied stride with stride  
 As I ride, as I ride !

## V.

As I ride, as I ride,  
 Could I loose what Fate has tied,  
 Ere I pried, she should hide  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 All that's meant me: satisfied  
 When the Prophet and the Bride  
 Stop veins I' d have subside  
 As I ride, as I ride !

---

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN ; A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER.)

---

## I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,  
 By famous Hanover city ;  
 The river Weser, deep and wide,  
 Washes its wall on the southern side ;  
 A pleasanter spot you never spied ;  
 But, when begins my ditty,  
 Almost five hundred years ago,  
 To see the townsfolk suffer so  
 From vermin, was a pity.

## II.

Rats .  
 They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,  
 And bit the babies in the cradles,  
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
 And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,  
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
 And even spoiled the women's chats,  
 By drowning their speaking  
 With shrieking and squeaking  
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

## III.

At last the people in a body  
 To the Town Hall came flocking :  
 " 'Tis clear," cried they, " our Mayor's a noddie ;  
 " And as for our Corporation—shocking

"To think we buy gowns lined with ermine  
 "For dolts that can't or won't determine  
 "What's best to rid us of our vermin!  
 "You hope, because you're old and obese,  
 "To find in the furry civic robe ease?  
 "Rouse up, Sirs! Give your brains a racking  
 "To find the remedy we're lacking,  
 "Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"  
 At this the Mayor and Corporation  
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sate in council,  
 At length the Mayor broke silence:  
 "For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell  
 "I wish I were a mile hence!  
 "It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—  
 "I'm sure my poor head aches again  
 "I've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
 "Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"  
 Just as he said this, what should hap  
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap?  
 "Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"  
 (With the Corporation as he sat,  
 Looking little though wondrous fat;  
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous  
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
 "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?"  
 "Anything like the sound of a ra  
 "Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V.

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:  
 And in did come the strangest figure!  
 His queer long coat from heel to head  
 Was half of yellow and half of red;  
 And he himself was tall and thin,  
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,  
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
 But lips where smiles went out and in—  
 There was no guessing his kith and kin!  
 And nobody could enough admire  
 The tall man and his quaint attire:  
 Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,  
 "Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,  
 "Had walked this way from his painted tomb-stone

## VI.

He advanced to the council-table :  
 And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,  
 "By means of a secret charm, to draw  
 "All creatures living beneath the sun,  
 "That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,  
 "After me so as you never saw !  
 "And I chiefly use my charm  
 "On creatures that do people harm,  
 "The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper ;  
 "And people call me the Pied Piper."  
 (And here they noticed round his neck  
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,  
 To match with his coat of the self-same cheque ;  
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;  
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying  
 As if impatient to be playing  
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
 "Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,  
 "In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
 "Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ;  
 "I eased in Asia the Nizam  
 "Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :  
 "And, as for what your brain bewilders,  
 "If I can rid your town of rats  
 "Will you give me a thousand guilders ?"  
 "One ? fifty thousand !" — was the exclamation  
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

## VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,  
 Smiling first a little smile,  
 As if he knew what magic slept  
 In his quiet pipe the while ;  
 Then, like a musical adept,  
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled  
 Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled ;  
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
 You heard as if an army muttered ;  
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;  
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;  
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.  
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,  
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
 Fathers, mothers, uncles cousins,

Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,  
 Families by tens and dozens,  
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
 Followed the Piper for their lives.  
 From street to street he piped advancing,  
 And step for step they followed dancing,  
 Until they came to the river Weser,  
 Wherein all plunged and perished  
 —Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
 Swam across and lived to carry  
 (As he the manuscript he cherished)  
 To Rat-land home his commentary,  
 Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
 “I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
 “And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
 “Into a cider-press’s gripe :  
 “And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
 “And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
 “And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
 “And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks  
 “And it seemed as if a voice  
 “(Sweeter far than by harp or by psalterý  
 “Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice !  
 “The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !  
 “So munch on, crunch on, take your nunccheon,  
 “Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !  
 “And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
 “All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
 “Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
 “Just as methought it said, Come, bore me !  
 “—I found the Weser rolling o’er me.”

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple ;  
 “Go,” cried the Mayor, “and get long poles !  
 “Poke out the nests and block up the holes !  
 “Consult with carpenters and builders,  
 “And leave in our town not even a trace  
 “Of the rats !”—when suddenly up the face  
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
 With a, “First, if you please, my thousand guilders !”

IX.

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;  
 So did the Corporation too.  
 For council dinners made rare havock  
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;

And half the money would replenish  
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.  
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !  
 " Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink  
 " Our business was done at the river's brink ;  
 " We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
 " And what 's dead can't come to life, I think.  
 " So, friend, we 're not the folks to shrink  
 " From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
 " And a matter of money to put in your poke ;  
 " But, as for the guilders, what we spoke  
 " Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
 " Beside, our losses have made us thrifty ;  
 " A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty ! "

## X.

The piper's face fell, and he cried,  
 " No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !  
 " I've promised to visit by dinner-time  
 " Bagdat, and accept the prime  
 " Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
 " For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,  
 " Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—  
 " With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
 " With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver !  
 " And folks who put me in a passion  
 " May find me pipe to another fashion."

## XI.

" How ? " cried the Mayor, " d'ye think I'll brook  
 " Being worse treated than a Cook ?  
 " Insulted by a lazy ribald  
 " With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?  
 " You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,  
 " Blow your pipe there till you burst ! "

## XII.

Once more he stept into the street ;  
 And to his lips again  
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;  
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
 Never gave the enraptured air)  
 There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling  
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,  
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
 Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,

And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,  
 Out came the children running.  
 All the little boys and girls,  
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,  
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
 Unable to move a step, or cry  
 To the children merrily skipping by—  
 And could only follow with the eye  
 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
 But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,  
 As the Piper turned from the High Street  
 To where the Weser rolled its waters  
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters!  
 However he turned from South to West,  
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed.  
 And after him the children pressed;  
 Great was the joy in every breast.  
 "He never can cross that mighty top  
 "He's forced to let the piping drop,  
 "And we shall see our children stop!"  
 When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side.  
 A wondrous portal opened wide,  
 As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;  
 And the Piper advanced and the children followed,  
 And when all were in to the very last,  
 The door in the mountain side shut fast.  
 Did I say, all? No! One was lame,  
 And could not dance the whole of the way;  
 And in after years, if you would blame  
 His sadness, he was used to say,—  
 'It's dull in our town since my playmates left!  
 'I can't forget that I'm bereft  
 'Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
 "Which the Piper also promised me;  
 "For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,  
 "Joining the town and just at hand,  
 "Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,  
 "And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
 "And everything was strange and new;  
 "The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,  
 "And their dogs outran our fallow deer,



" And honey-bees had lost their stings,  
 " And horses were born with eagles' wings;  
 " And just as I became assured  
 " My lame foot would be speedily cured,  
 " The music stopped and I stood still,  
 " And found myself outside the Hill,  
 " Left alone against my will,  
 " To go now limping as before,  
 " And never hear of that country more!"

## XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher's pate  
 A text which says, that Heaven's Gate  
 Opens to the Rich at as easy rate  
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in!  
 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South  
 To offer the Piper by word of mouth,

Wherever it was men's lot to find him,  
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
 If he 'd only return the way he went,  
 And bring the children behind him.  
 But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,  
 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,  
 They made a decree that lawyers never

Should think their records dated duly  
 If, after the day of the month and year,  
 These words did not as well appear,  
 " And so long after what happened here

" On the Twenty-second of July,  
 " Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six;"  
 And the better in memory to fix  
 The place of the Children's last retreat,  
 They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—  
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
 Was sure for the future to lose his labour.  
 Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern

To shock with mirth a street so solemn;  
 But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,  
 And on the Great Church Window painted  
 The same, to make the world acquainted  
 How their children were stolen away;  
 And there it stands to this very day.  
 And I must not omit to say  
 That in Transylvania there 's a tribe  
 Of alien people that ascribe

The outlandish ways and dress  
On which their neighbours lay such stress,  
To their fathers and mothers having risen  
Out of some subterraneous prison  
Into which they were trepanned  
Long time ago in a mighty band  
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
But how or why, they don't understand.

XV.

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers  
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers :  
And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or from mice,  
If we 've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS  
FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;  
“ Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew ;  
“ Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;  
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place ;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;  
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, “ Yet there is time ! ”

## IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze. as some bluff river headland its spray

## V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on

## VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned : and cried Joris, " Stay spur !  
" Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's not in her,  
" We 'll remember at Aix "—for one heard the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

## VII.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight ! "

## VIII.

" How they 'll greet us ! "—and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim

## IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round  
 As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees, on the ground,  
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
 Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

[FLORENCE, 15—.]

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's  
 Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar  
 Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes  
 Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
 To outburst on your night with all my gift  
 Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk  
 From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
 And wide to Heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk  
 To the centre, of an instant; or around  
 Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
 The license and the limit, space and bound,  
 Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.  
 And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
 Over the canvas could my hand have flung,  
 Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
 Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;  
 Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,  
 A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,  
 Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood  
 Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place,  
 Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
 And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—  
 O Human faces, hath it spilt my cup?  
 What did ye give me that I have not saved?  
 Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)  
 Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,  
 As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,  
 To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,  
 Bound for the calmly satisfied great State  
 Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,  
 Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,  
 Through old streets named afresh from its event,

Till it reached home, where learned Age should greet  
 My face, and Youth, the star not yet distinct  
 Above his hair, lie learning at my feet !—  
 Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
 With love about, and praise, till life should end,  
 And then not go to Heaven, but linger here,  
 Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—  
 The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear !  
 But a voice changed it ! Glimpses of such sights  
 Have scared me, like the revels thro' a door  
 Of some strange House of Idols at its rites ;  
 This world seemed not the world it was before !  
 Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped  
 . . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun  
 To press on me and judge me ? Tho' I stooped  
 Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,  
 They drew me forth, and spite of me . . enough !  
 These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,  
 Count them for garniture and household-stuff,  
 And where they live our pictures needs must live,  
 And see their faces, listen to their prate,  
 Partakers of their daily pettiness,  
 Discussed of,—“ This I love, or this I hate,  
 “ This likes me more, and this affects me less ! ”  
 Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles  
 My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
 These endless cloisters and eternal aisles  
 With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and Saint,  
 With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,  
 At least no merchant traffics in my heart ;  
 The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward  
 Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart :  
 Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine  
 While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,  
 They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,  
 'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.  
 So die, my pictures ; surely, gently die !  
 Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth ?  
 Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry ?  
 Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth ?

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

---

THAT second time they hunted me  
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
 And Austria, hounding far and wide  
 Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,  
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—  
 I made six days a hiding-place  
 Of that dry green old aqueduct  
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked  
 The fire-flies from the roof above,  
 Bright creeping thro' the moss they love.  
 —How long it seems since Charles was lost!  
 Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
 The country in my very sight;  
 And when that peril ceased at night,  
 The sky broke out in red dismay  
 With signal-fires; well, there I lay  
 Close covered o'er in my recess,  
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,  
 And Charles's miserable end,  
 And much beside, two days; the third,  
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard  
 The peasants from the village go  
 To work among the maize; you know,  
 With us, in Lombardy, they bring  
 Provisions packed on mules, a string  
 With little bells that cheer their task,  
 And casks, and boughs on every cask  
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;  
 These I let pass in jingling line,  
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
 The peasants from the village too;  
 For at the very rear would troop  
 Their wives and sisters in a group  
 To help, I knew; when these had passed,  
 I threw my glove to strike the last,  
 Taking the chance: she did not start,  
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart  
 One instant, rapidly glanced round,  
 And saw me beckon from the ground:

A wild bush grows and hides my crypt,  
 She picked my glove up while she stripped  
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
 With that; my glove lay in her breast:  
 Then I drew breath: they disappeared:  
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone  
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.  
 Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me  
 Rested the hopes of Italy;  
 I had devised a certain tale  
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
 Persuade a peasant of its truth;  
 I meant to call a freak of youth  
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay,  
 And no temptation to betray.  
 But when I saw that woman's face,  
 Its calm simplicity of grace,  
 Our Italy's own attitude  
 In which she walked thus far, and stood,  
 Planting each naked foot so firm,  
 To crush the snake and spare the worm—  
 At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
 "I am that man upon whose head  
 "They fix the price, because I hate  
 "The Austrians over us: the State  
 "Will give you gold—oh, gold so much,  
 "If you betray me to their clutch!  
 "And be your death, for aught I know,  
 "If once they find you saved their foe.  
 "Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
 "And also paper, pen, and ink,  
 "And carry safe what I shall write  
 "To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
 "Before the Duomo shuts; go in,  
 "And wait till Tenebræ begin;  
 "Walk to the Third Confessional,  
 "Between the pillar and the wall,  
 "And kneeling whisper *whence comes peace?*  
 "Say it a second time; then cease;  
 "And if the voice inside returns,  
 "*From Christ and Freedom: what concerns*  
 "*The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip  
 "My letter where you placed your lip;  
 "Then come back happy we have done  
 "Our mother service—I, the son,  
 "As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
 In the same place, with the same eyes :  
 I was no surer of sun-rise  
 Than of her coming : we conferred  
 Of her own prospects, and I heard  
 She had a lover—stout and tall,  
 She said—then let her eyelids fall,  
 “ He could do much ”—as if some doubt  
 Entered her heart,—then, passing out,  
 “ She could not speak for others—who  
 “ Had other thoughts ; herself she knew : ”  
 And so she brought me drink and food.  
 After four days, the scouts pursued  
 Another path : at last arrived  
 The help my Paduan friends contrived  
 To furnish me : she brought the news :  
 For the first time I could not choose  
 But kiss her hand and lay my own  
 Upon her head—“ This faith was shown  
 “ To Italy, our mother ;—she  
 “ Uses my hand and blesses thee ! ”  
 She followed down to the sea-shore ;  
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought  
 Concerning—much less wished for—ought  
 Beside the good of Italy,  
 For which I live and mean to die !  
 I never was in love ; and since  
 Charles proved false, nothing could convince  
 My inmost heart I had a friend ;  
 However, if I pleased to spend  
 Real wishes on myself—say, Three—  
 I know at least what one should be ;  
 I would grasp Metternich until  
 I felt his red wet throat distil  
 In blood thro’ these two hands : and next,  
 —Nor much for that am I perplexed—  
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,  
 Should die slow of a broken heart  
 Under his new employers : last  
 —Ah, there, what should I wish ? For fast  
 Do I grow old and out of strength.—  
 If I resolved to seek at length  
 My father’s house again, how scared  
 They all would look, and unprepared !  
 My brothers live in Austria’s pay  
 —Disowned me long ago, men say ;



And all my early mates who used  
 To praise me so—perhaps induced  
 More than one early step of mine—  
 Are turning wise; while some opine  
 “Freedom grows License,” some suspect  
 “Haste breeds Delay,” and recollect  
 They always said, such premature  
 Beginnings never could endure!  
 So, with a sullen “All’s for best,”  
 The land seems settling to its rest.  
 I think, then, I should wish to stand  
 This evening in that dear, lost land,  
 Over the sea the thousand miles,  
 And know if yet that woman smiles  
 With the calm smile; some little farm  
 She lives in there, no doubt; what harm  
 If I sate on the door-side bench,  
 And, while her spindle made a trench  
 Fantastically in the dust,  
 Inquired of all her fortunes—just  
 Her children’s ages and their names,  
 And what may be the husband’s aims  
 For each of them—I’d talk this out,  
 And sit there, for an hour about,  
 Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
 Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how  
 It steals the time! To business now

## THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

[PIANO DI SORRENTO.]

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,  
 Sit here by my side,  
 On my knees put up both little feet!  
 I was sure, if I tried,  
 I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco:  
 Now, open your eyes—  
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish  
 In black from the skies,  
 With telling my memories over  
 As you tell your beads;  
 All the memories plucked at Sorrento  
 —The flowers, or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn  
 Had net-worked with brown  
 The white skin of each grape on the bunches,  
 Marked like a quail's crown,  
 Those creatures you make such account of,  
 Whose heads,—specked with white  
 Over brown like a great spider's back,  
 As I told you last night,—  
 Your mother bites off for her supper;  
 Red-ripe as could be.  
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting  
 In halves on the tree:  
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone,  
 Or in the thick dust  
 On the path, or straight out of the rock side,  
 Wherever could thrust  
 Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower  
 Its yellow face up,  
 For the prize were great butterflies fighting,  
 Some five for one cup.  
 So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,  
 What change was in store,  
 By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets  
 Which woke me before  
 I could open my shutter, made fast  
 With a bough and a stone,  
 And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,  
 Sole lattice that 's known!  
 Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,  
 While, busy beneath,  
 Your priest and his brother tugged at them,  
 The rain in their teeth:  
 And out upon all the flat house-roofs  
 Where split figs lay drying,  
 The girls took the frails under cover:  
 Nor use seemed in trying  
 To get out the boats and go fishing,  
 For, under the cliff,  
 Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.  
 No seeing our skiff  
 Arrive about noon from Amalfi,  
 —Our fisher arrive,  
 And pitch down his basket before us,  
 All trembling alive  
 With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit,  
 —You touch the strange lumps,  
 And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner  
 Of horns and of humps.

Which only the fisher looks grave at,  
While round him like imps  
Cling screaming the children as naked  
And brown as his shrimps;  
Himself too as bare to the middle—  
—You see round his neck  
The string and its brass coin suspended,  
That saves him from wreck.  
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,  
So back to a man  
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards  
Grape-harvest began :  
In the vat, half-way up in our house-side,  
Like blood the juice spins,  
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing  
Till breathless he grins  
Dead-beaten, in effort on effort  
To keep the grapes under,  
Since still when he seems all but master,  
In pours the fresh plunder  
From girls who keep coming and going  
With basket on shoulder,  
And eyes shut against the rain's driving,  
Your girls that are older,—  
For under the hedges of aloe,  
And where, on its bed  
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple  
Lies pulpy and red,  
All the young ones are kneeling and filling  
Their laps with the snails  
Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—  
Your best of regales,  
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,  
When, supping in state,  
We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,  
Three over one plate)  
With lasagne so tempting to swallow  
In slippery ropes,  
And gourds fried in great purple slices,  
That colour of popes.  
Meantime, see the grape-bunch they've brought you,—  
The rain-water slips  
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe  
Which the wasp to your lips  
Still follows with fretful persistence—  
Nay, taste, while awake,  
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball,  
That peels, flake by flake,

Like an onion's, each smother and whiter ;  
 Next, sip this weak wine.  
 From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,  
 A leaf of the vine,—  
 And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh  
 That leaves thro' its juice  
 The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth  
 . . Scirocco is loose !  
 Hark ! the quick, whistling pelt of the olives  
 Which, thick in one's track,  
 Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,  
 Tho' not yet half black !  
 How the old twisted olive trunks shudder !  
 The medlars let fall  
 Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees  
 Snap off, figs and all,—  
 For here comes the whole of the tempest  
 No refuge, but creep  
 Back again to my side and my shoulder,  
 And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week  
 When all the vine-boughs  
 Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture  
 The mules and the cows ?  
 Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;  
 Your brother, my guide,  
 Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles  
 That offered, each side,  
 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—  
 Or strip from the sorbs  
 A treasure, so rosy and wondrous,  
 Of hairy gold orbs !  
 But my mule picked his sure, sober path out,  
 Just stopping to neigh  
 When he recognised down in the valley  
 His mates on their way  
 With the faggots, and barrels of water ;  
 And soon we emerged  
 From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow  
 And still as we urged  
 Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,  
 As up still we trudged  
 Tho' the wild path grew wilder each instant,  
 And place was e'en grudged  
 'Mid the rock-chasms, and piles of loose stones  
 (Like the loose broken teeth

Of some monster, which climbed there to die  
     From the ocean beneath)  
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed  
     That clung to the path,  
 And dark rosemary, ever a-dying,  
     That, 'spite the wind's wrath,  
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,—  
     And lentisks as staunch  
 To the stone where they root and bear berries,—  
     And . . . what shows a branch  
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets  
     Of pale seagreen leaves—  
 Over all trod my mule with the caution  
     Of gleaners o'er sheaves,  
 Still, foot after foot like a lady—  
     So, round after round,  
 He climbed to the top of Calvano,  
     And God's own profound  
 Was above me, and round me the mountains,  
     And under, the sea,  
 And within me, my heart to bear witness  
     What was and shall be!  
 Oh Heaven, and the terrible crystal!  
     No rampart excludes  
 Your eye from the life to be lived  
     In the blue solitudes!  
 Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!  
     Still moving with you—  
 For, ever some new head and breast of them  
     Thrusts into view  
 To observe the intruder—you see it  
     If quickly you turn  
 And, before they escape you, surprise them—  
     They grudge you should learn  
 How the soft plains they look on, lean over,  
     And love (they pretend)  
 —Cower beneath them; the flat sea-pine crouches  
     The wild fruit-trees bend,  
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut—  
     All is silent and grave—  
 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty—  
     How fair, but a slave!  
 So, I turned to the sea,—and there slumbered  
     As greenly as ever  
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli;  
     No ages can sever  
 The Three, nor enable their sister  
     To join them,—half-way

On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—  
 No farther to-day;  
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,  
 Watches breast-high and steady  
 From under the rock, her bold sister  
 Swum half-way already.  
 Fortù, shall we sail there together  
 And see from the sides  
 Quite new rocks show their faces—new haunts  
 Where the siren abides?  
 Shall we sail round and round them, close over  
 The rocks, tho' unseen,  
 That ruffle the grey glassy water  
 To glorious green?  
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,  
 Reach land and explore,  
 On the largest, the strange square black turret  
 With never a door,  
 Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;  
 Then, stand there and hear  
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us  
 What life is, so clear!  
 The secret they sang to Ulysses,  
 When, ages ago,  
 He heard and he knew this life's secret,  
 I hear and I know!

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano—  
 He strikes the great gloom  
 And flutters it o'er the mount's summit  
 In airy gold fume!  
 All is over! Look out, see the gipsy,  
 Our tinker and smith,  
 Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,  
 And down-squatted forthwith  
 To his hammering, under the wall there;  
 One eye keeps aloof  
 The urchins that itch to be putting  
 His jews'-harps to proof,  
 While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,  
 Is watching how sleek  
 Shines the hog, come to share in the windfalls  
 --An abbot's own cheek!  
 All is over! Wake up and come out now,  
 And down let us go,  
 And see the fine things got in order  
 At Church for the show

Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening;  
 To-morrow's the Feast  
 Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means  
 Of Virgins the least—  
 As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse  
 Which (all nature, no art)  
 The Dominican brother, these three weeks,  
 Was getting by heart.  
 Not a post nor a pillar but 's dizen'd  
 With red and blue papers;  
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar  
 A-blaze with long tapers;  
 But the great masterpiece is the scaffold  
 Rigged glorious to hold  
 All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers  
 And trumpeters bold,  
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,  
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,  
 Will strike us up something that 's brisk  
 For the feast's second course.  
 And then will the flaxen-wigged Image  
 Be carried in pomp  
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession  
 The priests mean to stomp.  
 And all round the glad church lie old bottles  
 With gunpowder stopp'd,  
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters,  
 Religiously popped.  
 And at night from the crest of Calvano  
 Great bonfires will hang,  
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,  
 And more poppers bang!  
 At all events, come—to the garden,  
 As far as the wall,  
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster  
 Till out there shall fall  
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

. . . "Such trifles"—you say?  
 Fortù, in my England at home,  
 Men meet gravely to-day  
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws  
 Is righteous and wise  
 —If 'tis proper, Scirocco should vanish  
 In black from the skies!

## THE LOST LEADER.

---

### I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us.  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote ;  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,  
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :  
 How all our copper had gone for his service !  
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !  
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,  
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !  
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves  
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

### II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;  
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;  
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,  
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :  
 Blot out his name, then,—record one lost soul more,  
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
 One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for angels,  
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !  
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !  
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
 Never glad confident morning again !  
 Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike gallantly,  
 Aim at our heart ere we pierce through his own ;  
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
 Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the throne !



## THE LOST MISTRESS.

## I.

ALL 's over, then—does truth sound bitter  
As one at first believes ?  
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter  
About your cottage eaves !

## II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,  
I noticed that, to-day ;  
One day more bursts them open fully  
—You know the red turns gray.

## III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest ?  
May I take your hand in mine ?  
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest  
Keep much that I 'll resign :

## IV.

For each glance of that eye so bright and black,  
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—  
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,  
Though it stays in my soul for ever !—

## V.

—Yet I will but say what mere friends say,  
Or only a thought stronger ;  
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,  
Or so very little longer !

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

---

I.

OH, to be in England  
Now that April 's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!

II.

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows—  
Hark! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That 's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower,  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

---

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

---

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away;  
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;  
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face of Trafalgar lay:  
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar grand  
and gray;  
“Here and here did England help me,—how can I help  
England?”—say,  
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,  
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

## THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH.

[ROME, 15—.]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !  
 Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?  
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not ! Well—  
 She, men would have to be your mother once,  
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !  
 What 's done is done, and she is dead beside,  
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since ;  
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,  
 And thence ye may perceive the world 's a dream.  
 Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie  
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,  
 Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask  
 "Do I live, am I dead ? " Peace, peace seems all.  
 St. Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;  
 And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought  
 With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :  
 —Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;  
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South  
 He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !  
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence  
 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,  
 And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,  
 And up into the aery dome where live  
 The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk :  
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,  
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,  
 With those nine columns round me, two and two,  
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :  
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe  
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse  
 —Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,  
 Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,  
 Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !  
 Draw close : that conflagration of my church  
 —What then ? So much was saved if aught were missed !  
 My sons, ye would not be my death ? Go dig  
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,  
 Drop water gently till the surface sinks,

And if ye find . . . ah God, I know not, I! . . .  
 Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,  
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,  
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,  
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,  
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .  
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,  
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,  
 So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,  
 Like God the Father's globe on both his hands  
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,  
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!  
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:  
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?  
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—  
 'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else  
 Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?  
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,  
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance  
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,  
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,  
 St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan  
 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,  
 And Moses with the tables . . . but I know  
 Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,  
 Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope  
 To revel down my villas while I gasp  
 Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine  
 Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!  
 Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!  
 'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve  
 My bath must needs be left behind, alas!  
 One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,  
 There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—  
 And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray  
 Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,  
 And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?  
 That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,  
 Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,  
 No gaudy ware like Gandolu's second line—  
 Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!  
 And then how I shall lie through centuries,  
 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,  
 And see God made and eaten all day long,  
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste  
 Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!  
 For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,  
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,

I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,  
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,  
 And let the bed-clothes for a mort-cloth drop  
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :  
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts  
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,  
 About the life before I lived this life,  
 And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and Priests,  
 St. Praxed at his sermon on the mount,  
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,  
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,  
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,  
 —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?  
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !  
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.  
 All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope  
 My villas : will ye ever eat my heart ?  
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,  
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,  
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,  
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase  
 With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,  
 And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx  
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,  
 To comfort me on my entablature  
 Whereon I am to lie till I must ask  
 "Do I live, am I dead ? " There, leave me, there !  
 For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude  
 To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it ! Stone—  
 Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat  
 As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—  
 And no more *lapis* to delight the world !  
 Well, go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,  
 But in a row : and, going, turn your backs  
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,  
 And leave me in my church, the church for peace,  
 That I may watch at leisure if he leers—  
 Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,  
 As still he envied me, so fair she was !

## GARDEN-FANCIES.

### I.—THE FLOWER'S NAME.

#### I.

HERE'S the garden she walked across,  
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since :  
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss  
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !  
 She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,  
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;  
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,  
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

#### II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk  
 She went while her robe's-edge brushed the box :  
 And here she paused in her gracious talk  
 To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.  
 Roses, ranged in valiant row,  
 I will never think that she passed you by !  
 She loves you noble roses, I know ;  
 But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

#### III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,  
 Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim ;  
 Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,  
 Its soft meandering Spanish name.  
 What a name ! was it love, or praise ?  
 Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake ?  
 I must learn Spanish, one of these days,  
 Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

#### IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,  
 I may bring her, one of these days,  
 To fix you fast with as fine a spell,  
 Fit you each with his Spanish phrase !  
 But do not detain me now ; for she lingers  
 There, like sunshine over the ground,  
 And ever I see her soft white fingers  
 Searching after the bud she found.

## V.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,  
 Stay as you are and be loved for ever !  
 But, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,  
 Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !  
 For while thus it pouts, her fingers wrestle,  
 Twinkling the audacious leaves between,  
 Till round they turn and down they nestle—  
 Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

## VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;  
 Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;  
 Is there no method to tell her in Spanish  
 June 's twice June since she breathed it with me ?  
 Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,  
 Treasure my lady's lightest foot-fall  
 —Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—  
 Roses, you are not so fair after all !

## II.—SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

## I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I !  
 He who wrote what I hold in my hand,  
 Centuries back was so good as to die,  
 Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;  
 This, that was a book in its time,  
 Printed on paper and bound in leather,  
 Last month in the white of a matin-prime  
 Just when the birds sang all together.

## II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,  
 And under the arbut and laurustine  
 Read it, so help me grace in my need,  
 From title-page to closing line.  
 Chapter on chapter did I count,  
 As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;  
 Added up the mortal amount ;  
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

## III.

Yonder 's a plum-tree, with a crevice  
 An owl would build in, were he but sage ;  
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis  
 • In a castle of the middle age.

Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;  
 When he 'd be private, there might he spend  
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber :  
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash went he, as under he ducked,  
 —I knew at the bottom rain-drippings stagnate ;  
 Next a handful of blossoms I plucked  
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate ;  
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,  
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;  
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf  
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss  
 And gum that locked our friend in limbo,  
 A spider had spun his web across,  
 And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo :  
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,  
 And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis*,  
*Cantate !* quoth I, as I got a rake,  
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,  
 With all the binding all of a blister,  
 And great blue spots where the ink has run,  
 And reddish streaks that wink and glister  
 O'er the page so beautifully yellow—  
 Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks !  
 Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow ?  
 Here 's one stuck in his chapter six !

VII.

How did he like it when the live creatures  
 Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,  
 And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,  
 Came in, each one, for his right of trover ;  
 When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face  
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,  
 And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface  
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

VIII.

All that life, and fun, and romping,  
 All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,  
 While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,  
 And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling !



As if you had carried sour John Knox  
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,  
 Fastened him into a front-row box,  
 And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic !

## IX.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough is it ?  
 Back to my room shall you take your sweet self !  
 Good-bye, mother-beetle ; husband-left, *sufficit* !  
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf :  
 A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,  
 Here 's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,  
 And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,  
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

## THE LABORATORY.

[ANCIEN REGIME.]

## I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,  
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,  
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy—  
 Which is the poison to poison her, prithee ?

## II.

He is with her ; and they know that I know  
 Where they are, what they do : they believe my tears flow  
 While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear  
 Empty church, to pray God in, for them !—I am here.

## III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,  
 Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste !  
 Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,  
 Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

## IV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum ?  
 Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come !  
 And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,  
 Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too ?

V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,  
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!  
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,  
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,  
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!  
But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her head,  
And her breast, and her arms, and her hands, should drop dead!

VII.

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!  
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?  
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,  
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII.

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me—  
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free  
The soul from those strong, great eyes,—say, “No!”  
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought  
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought  
Could I keep them one-half minute fixed, she would fall,  
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!  
Let death be felt and the proof remain;  
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—  
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI.

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose,  
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:  
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—  
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,  
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!  
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings  
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!

## THE CONFESSIONAL.

[SPAIN.]

## I.

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,  
 Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope  
 Are lies, and lies—there! thro' my door  
 And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,  
 There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled,  
 Till spite of them I reach the world!

## II.

You think Priests just and holy men!  
 Before they put me in this den,  
 I was a human creature too,  
 With flesh and blood like one of you,  
 A girl that laughed in beauty's pride  
 Like lilies in your world outside.

## III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!  
 This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,  
 Was kissed all over till it burned,  
 By lips the truest, love e'er turned  
 His heart's own tint: one night they kissed  
 My soul out in a burning mist.

## IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train  
 Of things grew round my sense again,  
 "That is a sin," I said—and slow  
 With downcast eyes to church I go,  
 And pass to the confession-chair,  
 And tell the old mild father there.

## V.

But when I faulter Beltran's name,  
 "Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame  
 "The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?  
 "Despair not,—strenuously retrieve!  
 "Nay, I will turn this love of thine  
 "To lawful love, almost divine.

VI.

" For he is young, and led astray,  
 " This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,  
 " To change the laws of church and state;  
 " So, thine shall be an angel's fate,  
 " Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll  
 " Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII.

" For, when he lies upon thy breast,  
 " Thou mayst demand and be possessed  
 " Of all his plans, and next day steal  
 " To me, and all those plans reveal,  
 " That I and every priest, to purge  
 " His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,  
 With love and truth his brow seemed bright;  
 I went back, all on fire with joy,  
 And, that same evening, bade the boy  
 Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,  
 Something to prove his love of me.

IX.

He told me what he would not tell  
 For hope of Heaven or fear of Hell;  
 And I lay listening in such pride,  
 And, soon as he had left my side,  
 Tripped to the church by morning-light  
 To save his soul in his despite.

X.

I told the father all his schemes,  
 Who were his comrades, what their dreams;  
 " And now make haste," I said, " to pray  
 " The one spot from his soul away:  
 " To-night he comes, but not the same  
 " Will look!" At night he never came.

XI.

Nor next night: on the after-morn,  
 I went forth with a strength new-born:  
 The church was empty; something drew  
 My steps into the street; I knew  
 It led me to the market-place—  
 Where, lo,—on high—the father's face!

## XII.

That horrible black scaffold drest—  
 The stapled block . . . God sink the rest !  
 That head strapped back, that blinding vest,  
 Those knotted hands and naked breast—  
 Till near one busy hangman pressed—  
 And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

## XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !  
 No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here,  
 No Earth, not so much space as pens  
 My body in their worst of dens  
 But shall bear God and Man my cry—  
 Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

## THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

## I.

You 'RE my friend :  
 I was the man the Duke spoke to ;  
 I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke too ;  
 So, here 's the tale from beginning to end,  
 My friend !

## II.

Ours is a great wild country :  
 If you climb to our castle's top,  
 I don't see where your eye can stop ;  
 For when you 've passed the corn-field country,  
 Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,  
 And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,  
 And cattle-tract to open-chase,  
 And open-chase to the very base  
 Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,  
 Round about, solemn and slow,  
 One by one, row after row,  
 Up and up the pine-trees go,  
 So, like black priests up, and so  
 Down the other side again  
 To another greater, wilder country,  
 That 's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,  
 Branched thro' and thro' with many a vein

Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;  
 Look right, look left, look straight before,—  
 Beneath they mine, above they smelt,  
 Copper-ore and iron-ore,  
 And forge and furnace mould and melt,  
 And so on, more and ever more,  
 Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,  
 Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,  
 —And the whole is our Duke's country!

III.

I was born the day this present Duke was—  
 (And O, says the song, ere I was old!)  
 In the castle where the other Duke was—  
 (When I was hopeful and young, not old!)  
 I in the Kennel, he in the Bower:  
 We are of like age to an hour.  
 My father was Huntsman in that day;  
 Who has not heard my father say  
 That, when a boar was brought to bay,  
 Three times, four times out of five,  
 With his huntspear he'd contrive  
 To get the killing-place transfix'd,  
 And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?  
 And that's why the old Duke had rather  
 Have lost a salt-pit than my father,  
 And loved to have him ever in call;  
 That's why my father stood in the hall  
 When the old Duke brought his infant out  
 To show the people, and while they pass'd  
 The wondrous bantling round about,  
 Was first to start at the outside blast  
 As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,  
 Just a month after the babe was born.  
 "And" quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since  
 The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince  
 Needs the Duke's self at his side:"  
 The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,  
 But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,  
 Castles a-fire, men on their march,  
 The toppling tower, the crashing arch;  
 And up he looked, and awhile he eyed  
 The row of crests and shields and banners,  
 Of all achievements after all manners,  
 And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.  
 The more was his comfort when he died  
 At next year's end, in a velvet suit,  
 With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot

In a silken shoe for a leather boot,  
 Petticoated like a herald,  
 In a chamber next to an ante-room,  
 Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,  
 What he called stink, and they, perfume :  
 —They should have set him on red Berold,  
 Mad with pride, like fire to manage !  
 They should have got his cheek fresh tannage  
 Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !  
 Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !  
 —Hark, the wind 's on the heath at its game !  
 Oh for a noble falcon-lanner  
 To flap each broad wing like a banner,  
 And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !  
 Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin !  
 —Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine—  
 Put to his lips when they saw him pine,  
 A cup of our own Moldavia fine,  
 Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,  
 And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

## IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess  
 Was left with the infant in her clutches,  
 She being the daughter of God knows who :  
 And now was the time to revisit her tribe,  
 So, abroad and afar they went, the two,  
 And let our people rail and gibe  
 At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,  
 As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,  
 Till after long years we had our desire,  
 And back came the Duke and his mother again.

## V.

And he came back the pertest little ape  
 That ever affronted human shape ;  
 Full of his travel, struck at himself—  
 You 'd say, he despised our bluff old ways  
 —Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf  
 That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,  
 The one good thing left in evil days ;  
 Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic 'Time,  
 And only in wild nooks like ours  
 Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,  
 And see true castles, with proper towers,  
 Young-hearted women, old-minded men,  
 And manners now as manners were then.

So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,  
 This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;  
 'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,  
 Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,  
 He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,  
 The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out:  
 And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,  
 On a lathy horse, all legs and length,  
 With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;  
 —They should have set him on red Berold,  
 With the red eye slow consuming in fire,  
 And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:  
 And out of a convent, at the word,  
 Came the Lady, in time of spring.  
 —Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!  
 That day, I know, with a dozen oaths,  
 I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes,  
 Fit for the chase of urox or buffle  
 In winter-time when you need to muffle;  
 But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,  
 And so we saw the Lady arrive:  
 My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!  
 She was the smallest lady alive,  
 Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,  
 Too small, almost, for the life and gladness  
 That over-filled her, as some hive  
 Out of the bears' reach on the high trees  
 Is crowded with its safe merry bees:  
 In truth, she was not hard to please!  
 Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,  
 Straight at the castle, that's best indeed  
 To look at from outside the walls:  
 As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"  
 She as much thanked me as if she had said it,  
 (With her eyes, do you understand?)  
 Because I patted her horse while I led it;  
 And Max, who rode on her other hand,  
 Said, no bird flew past but she enquired  
 What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—  
 If that was an eagle she saw hover,—  
 If the green and gray bird on the field was the plover.  
 When suddenly appeared the Duke,  
 And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed  
 On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,  
 And as if his backbone were not jointed,



The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,  
 And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;  
 And, mind you, his mother all the while  
 Chilled in the ear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;  
 And up, like a weary yawn, with its pulleys  
 Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;  
 And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,  
 The Lady's face stopped its play,  
 As if her first hair had grown grey—  
 For such things must begin some one day !

## VII.

In a day or two she was well again ;  
 As who should say, " You labour in vain !  
 " This is all a jest against God, who meant  
 " I should ever be, as I am, content  
 " And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I will be ! "  
 So, smiling as at first went she.

## VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire—  
 Could not rest, could not tire—  
 To a stone she had given life !  
 (I myself loved once, in my day,)  
 —For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's wife,  
 (I had a wife, I know what I say,)  
 Never in all the world such an one  
 And here was plenty to be done,  
 And she that could do it, great or small,  
 She was to do nothing at all.  
 There was already this man in his post,  
 This in his station, and that in his office,  
 And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,  
 To meet his eye, with the other trophies,  
 Now outside the Hall, now in it,  
 To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,  
 At the proper place in the proper minute,  
 And die away the life between.  
 And it was amusing enough, each infraction  
 Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)—  
 To hear the consummate self-satisfaction  
 With which the young Duke and the old Dame  
 Would let her advise, and criticise,  
 And, being a fool, instruct the wise,  
 And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame  
 They bore it all in complacent guise,  
 As tho' an artificer, after contriving  
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,

Should find with delight it could motion to strike him !  
 So found the Duke, and his mother like him,—  
 The Lady hardly got a rebuff—  
 That had not been contemptuous enough,  
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,  
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX.

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,  
 Paling and ever paling,  
 As the way is with a hid chagrin ;  
 And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,  
 And said in his heart, " 'Tis done to spite me,  
 " But I shall find in my power to right me ! "   
 Don't swear, friend—the Old One, many a year,  
 Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,  
 When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,  
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice  
 That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,  
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,  
 And another and another, and faster and faster,  
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled :  
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our master  
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,  
 And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,  
 He should do the Middle Age no treason  
 In resolving on a hunting-party.  
 Always provided, old books showed the way of it '  
 What meant old poets by their strictures ?  
 And when old poets had said their say of it,  
 How taught old painters in their pictures ?  
 We must revert to the proper channels,  
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on pannels,  
 And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions :  
 Here was food for our various ambitions,  
 As on each case, exactly stated,  
 —To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,  
 Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup—  
 We of the household took thought and debated.  
 Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin  
 His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;  
 Blessedder he who nobly sunk " ohs "  
 And " ahs " while he tugged on his grandsire's trunkhose ;  
 What signified hats if they had no rims on,

Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,  
 And able to serve at sea for a shallop,  
 Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?  
 So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on 't,  
 What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,  
 Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,  
 And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on 't !

## XI.

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness  
 Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jackboots subsided,  
 The Duke put this question, " The Duke's part provided,  
 " Had not the Duchess some share in the business ? "   
 For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses,  
 Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :  
 And, after much laying of heads together,  
 Somebody's cap got a notable feather  
 By the announcement with proper unction  
 That he had discovered the lady's function ;  
 Since ancient authors held this tenet,  
 " When horns wind a mort and the deer it at siege,  
 " Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,  
 " And with water to wash the hands of her liege  
 " In a clean ewer with a fair towelling,  
 " Let her preside at the disembowelling."  
 Now, my friend, if you had so little religion  
 As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,  
 And thrust her broad wings like a banner  
 Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;  
 And if day by day, and week by week,  
 You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,  
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,  
 Would it cause you any great surprise  
 If when you decided to give her an airing  
 You found she needed a little preparing ?  
 —I say, should you be such a curnudgeon,  
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?  
 Yet when the Duke to his Lady signified,  
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,  
 In what a pleasure she was to participate,—  
 And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,  
 Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,  
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,  
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,  
 But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,  
 Of the weight by day and the watch by night,  
 And much wrong now that used to be right,

So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—  
 Was conduct ever more affronting ?  
 With all the ceremony settled—  
 With the towel ready, and the sewer  
 Polishing up his oldest ewer,  
 And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,  
 Black-barred, creamed-coated and pink eye-ball'd,—  
 No wonder if the Duke was nettled !  
 And when she persisted nevertheless,—  
 Well, I suppose, here 's the time to confess  
 That there ran half round our Lady's chamber  
 A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;  
 And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,  
 Stayed in call outside, what need of relating ?  
 And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent  
 Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant ;  
 And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,  
 How could I keep at any vast distance ?  
 And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,  
 The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,  
 Stood for a while in a sultry smother,  
 And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,  
 Turned her over to his yellow mother  
 To learn what was decorous and lawful ;  
 And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,  
 As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct—  
 Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once !  
 What meant she ?—Who was she ?—Her duty and station,  
 The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,  
 Its decent regard and its fitting relation—  
 In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free  
 And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,  
 And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,  
 And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on !  
 Well, somehow or other it ended at last  
 And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;  
 And after her,—making (he hoped) a face  
 Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,  
 Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace  
 Of ancient hero or modern paladin,—  
 From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn  
 Unbending of the vertebral column !

XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered,  
 And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,  
 And there 'neath his bonnet the prickler blustered,  
 With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;

For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog  
 You might cut as an axe chops a log.  
 Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;  
 And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,  
 Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,  
 And a sinking at the lower abdomen  
 Begins the day with indifferent omen :  
 And lo, as he looked around uneasily,  
 The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder  
 This way and that from the valley under ;  
 And, looking thro' the court-yard arch,  
 Down in the valley, what should meet him  
 But a troop of Gypsies on their march,  
 No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

## XIII.

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only  
 After reaching all lands beside ;  
 North they go, south they go, trooping or lonely,  
 And still, as they travel far and wide,  
 Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,  
 That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there :  
 But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,  
 And nowhere else, I take it, are found  
 With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;  
 Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on  
 The very fruit they are meant to feed on :  
 For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,  
 The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,  
 Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,  
 They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—  
 Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle  
 With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;  
 Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards ;  
 Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,  
 Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on a swivel  
 And won't allow the hoof to shrivel ;  
 Then they cast bells like the shell of a winkle,  
 That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle :  
 But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;  
 Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters !  
 Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,  
 Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,  
 As if in pure water you dropped and let die  
 A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;  
 And that other sort, their crowning pride,  
 With long white threads distinct inside,  
 Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle

Loose such a length and never tangle,  
 Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,  
 And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters  
 Such are the works they put their hand to,  
 And the uses they turn and twist iron and sand to  
 And these made the troop which our Duke saw sally  
 Towards his castle from out of the valley,  
 Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,  
 Come out with the morning to greet our riders ;  
 And up they wound till they reached the ditch,  
 Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,  
 That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,  
 By her gait, directly, and her stoop,  
 I, whom Jacynth was used to importune  
 To let that same witch tell us our fortune.  
 The oldest Gypsy then above ground ;  
 And, so sure as the autumn season came round,  
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,  
 And every time, as she swore, for the last time.  
 And presently she was seen to sidle  
 Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,  
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up  
 As under its nose the old witch peered up  
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes,  
 Of no use now but to gather brine,  
 And began a kind of level whine,  
 Such as they used to sing to their viols  
 When their ditties they go grinding  
 Up and down with nobody minding :  
 And, then as of old, at the end of the humming  
 Her usual presents were forthcoming  
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,  
 (Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)  
 Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—  
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.  
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe  
 A word in reply ; and in vain she felt  
 With twitching fingers at her belt  
 For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,  
 Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—  
 Till, either to quicken his apprehension,  
 Or possibly with an after-intention,  
 She was come, she said, to pay her duty  
 To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.  
 No sooner had she named his Lady,  
 Than a shine lit up the face so shady,  
 And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—  
 For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning ;

If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,  
 She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow :  
 And who so fit a teacher of trouble  
 As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double ?  
 So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,  
 (If such it was, for they grow so hirsute  
 That their own fleece serves for natural fur suit)  
 He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,  
 The life of the Lady, so flower-like and delicate,  
 With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.  
 I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned  
 From out of the throng, and while I drew near  
 He told the crone, as I since have reckoned  
 By the way he bent and spoke into her ear  
 With circumspection and mystery,  
 The main of the Lady's history,  
 Her frowardness and ingratitude ;  
 And for all the crone's submissive attitude  
 I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,  
 And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,  
 As tho' she engaged with hearty good will  
 Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,  
 And promised the Lady a thorough frightening.  
 And so, just giving her a glimpse  
 Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps  
 The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,  
 He bade me take the Gypsy mother  
 And set her telling some story or other  
 Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,  
 To while away a weary hour  
 For the Lady left alone in her bower,  
 Whose mind and body craved exertion  
 And yet shrank from all better diversion.

## XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curvetter,  
 Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo  
 Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,  
 And back I turned and bade the crone follow.  
 And what makes me confident what's to be told you,  
 Had all along been of this crone's devising,  
 Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,  
 There was a novelty quick as surprising :  
 For, first, she had shot up a full head in stature,  
 And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,  
 As if age had foregone its usurpature,  
 And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,  
 And the face looked quite another nature,

And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,  
 Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement,  
 For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,  
 Gold coins were glittering on the edges,  
 Like the band-roll strung with tomans  
 Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :  
 And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly  
 Come out as after the rain he paces,  
 Two unmistakable eye-points duly  
 Live and aware looked out of their places.  
 So we went and found Jacynth at the entry  
 Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry ;  
 I told the command and produced my companion,  
 And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,  
 For since last night, by the same token,  
 Not a single word had the Lady spoken :  
 So they went in both to the presence together,  
 While I in the balcony watched the weather.

xv.

And now, what took place at the very first of all,  
 I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :  
 Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall  
 On that little head of hers and burn it,  
 If she knew how she came to drop so soundly  
 Asleep of a sudden and there continue  
 The whole time sleeping as profoundly  
 As one of the boars my father would pin you  
 'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison,  
 —Jacynth forgive me the comparison !  
 But where I begin my own narration  
 Is a little after I took my station  
 To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,  
 And, having in those days a falcon eye,  
 To follow the hunt thro' the open country,  
 From where the bushes thinlier crested  
 The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree :—  
 When, in a moment, my ear was arrested  
 By—was it singing, or was it saying,  
 Or a strange musical instrument playing  
 In the chamber ?—and, to be certain,  
 I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,  
 And there lay Jacynth asleep,  
 Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,  
 In a rosy sleep along the floor,  
 With her head against the door ;  
 While in the midst, on the seat of state,  
 Like a queen the Gypsy woman sate,



With head and face downbent  
 On the Lady's head and face intent,  
 For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,  
 The Lady sate between her knees,  
 And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,  
 And on those hands her chin was set,  
 And her upturned face met the face of the crone  
 Wherein the eyes had grown and grown  
 As if she could double and quadruple  
 At pleasure the play of either pupil  
 —Very like by her hands slow fanning,  
 As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers  
 They moved to measure like bell clappers  
 —I said, is it blessing, is it banning,  
 Do they applaud you or burlesque you?  
 Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?  
 When, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,  
 At once I was stopped by the Lady's expression:  
 For it was life her eyes were drinking  
 From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,  
 Life's pure fire received without shrinking,  
 Into the heart and breast whose heaving  
 Told you no single drop they were leaving—  
 Life, that, filling her, passed redundant  
 Into her very hair, back swerving  
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,  
 As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving,  
 And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,  
 Moving to the mystic measure,  
 Bounding as the bosom bounded.  
 I stopped short, more and more confounded,  
 As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,  
 As she listened and she listened,—  
 When all at once a hand detained me,  
 And the self-same contagion gained me,  
 And I kept time to the wondrous chime,  
 Making out words and prose and rhyme,  
 Till it seemed that the music furred  
 Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped  
 From under the words it first had propped,  
 And left them midway in the world,  
 And word took word as hand takes hand,  
 I could hear at last, and understand,  
 And when I held the unbroken thread,  
 The Gypsy said:—

“And so at last we find my tribe  
 And so I set thee in the midst,

And to one and all of them describe  
 What thou saidst and what thou didst,  
 Our long and terrible journey thro',  
 And all thou art ready to say and do  
 In the trials that remain :  
 I trace them the vein and the other vein  
 That meet on thy brow and part again,  
 Making our rapid mystic mark ;  
 And I bid my people prove and probe  
 Each eye's profound and glorious globe  
 Till they detect the kindred spark  
 In those depths so dear and dark,  
 Like the spots that snap, and burst, and flee.  
 Circling over the midnight sea.  
 And on that young round cheek of thine  
 I make them recognise the tinge,  
 As when of the costly scarlet wine  
 They drip so much as will impinge  
 And spread in a thinnest scale afloat  
 One thick gold drop from the olive's coat  
 Over a silver plate whose sheen  
 Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.  
 For, so I prove thee, to one and all,  
 Fit, when my people ope their breast,  
 To see the sign, and hear the call,  
 And take the vow, and stand the test  
 Which adds one more child to the rest—  
 When the breast is bare and the arms are wide  
 And the world is left outside.  
 For there is probation to decree,  
 And many and long must the trials be  
 Thou shalt victoriously endure,  
 If that brow is true and those eyes are sure ;  
 Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay  
 Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—  
 Let once the vindicating ray  
 Leap out amid the anxious gloom,  
 And steel and fire have done their part  
 And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;  
 So, trial after trial past,  
 Wilt thou fall at the very last  
 Breathless, half in trance  
 With the thrill of the great deliverance,  
 Into our arms for evermore ;  
 And thou shalt know, those arms once curled  
 About thee, what we knew before,  
 How love is the only good in the world.  
 Henceforth be loved as heart can love,

Or brain devise, or hand approve !  
 Stand up, look below,  
 It is our life at thy feet we throw  
 To step with into light and joy ;  
 Not a power of life but we 'll employ  
 To satisfy thy nature's want ;  
 Art thou the tree that props the plant,  
 Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—  
 Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?  
 If any two creatures grew into one,  
 They would do more than the world has done ;  
 Tho' each apart were never so weak,  
 Yet vainly thro' the world should ye seek  
 For the knowledge and the might  
 Which in such union grew their right :  
 So, to approach, at least, that end,  
 And blend,—as much as may be, blend  
 Thee with us or us with thee,  
 As climbing-plant or propping-tree,  
 Shall some one deck thee, over and down,  
 Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?  
 Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown,  
 Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,  
 Die on thy boughs and disappear  
 While not a leaf of thine is sere ?  
 Or is the other fate in store,  
 And art thou fitted to adore,  
 To give thy wondrous self away,  
 And take a stronger nature's sway ?  
 I foresee and I could foretell  
 Thy future portion, sure and well—  
 But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,  
 And let them say what thou shalt do !  
 Only, be sure thy daily life,  
 In its peace, or in its strife,  
 Never shall be unobserved ;  
 We pursue thy whole career,  
 And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—  
 Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,  
 We are beside thee, in all thy ways,  
 With our blame, with our praise,  
 Our shame to feel, our pride to show,  
 Glad, sorry—but indifferent, no !  
 Whether it is thy lot to go,  
 For the good of us all, where the haters meet  
 In the crowded city's horrible street ;  
 Or thou step alone thro' the morass  
 Where never sound yet was

Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,  
 For the air is still, and the water still,  
 When the blue breast of the dipping coot  
 Dives under, and all again is mute.  
 So at the last shall come old age,  
 Decrepit as befits that stage;  
 How else wouldst thou retire apart  
 With the hoarded memories of thy heart,  
 And gather all to the very least  
 Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,  
 Let fall through eagerness to find  
 The crowning dainties yet behind?  
 Ponder on the entire past  
 Laid together thus at last,  
 When the twilight helps to fuse  
 The first fresh, with the faded hues,  
 And the outline of the whole,  
 As round eve's shades their framework roll,  
 Grandly fronts for once thy soul:  
 And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam  
 Of yet another morning breaks,  
 And like the hand which ends a dream,  
 Death, with the might of his sunbeam,  
 Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,  
 Then—"

Ay, then, indeed, something would happen!  
 But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;  
 There grew more of the music and less of the words;  
 Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen  
 To paper and put you down every syllable,  
 With those clever clerkly fingers,  
 All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers  
 In this old brain of mine that's but ill able  
 To give you even this poor version  
 Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering  
 —More fault of those who had the hammering  
 Of prosody into me and syntax,  
 And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!  
 But to return from this excursion,—  
 Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,  
 The peace most deep and the charm completest,  
 There came, shall I say, a snap—  
 And the charm vanished!  
 And my sense returned, so strangely banished,  
 And, starting as from a nap,  
 I knew the crone was bewitching my Lady,  
 With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I,  
 Down from the casement, round to the portal,

Another minute and I had entered,  
When the door opened, and more than mortal  
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred  
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,  
The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by palsy.  
She was so different, happy and beautiful,  
I felt at once that all was best,  
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,  
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.  
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,  
—I saw the glory of her eye,  
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding  
And I was hers to live or to die.  
As for finding what she wanted,  
You know God Almighty granted  
Such little signs should serve his wild creatures  
To tell one another all their desires,  
So that each knows what its friend requires,  
And does its bidding without teachers.  
I preceded her; the crone  
Followed silent and alone;  
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered  
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk  
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;  
In short, the soul in its body sunk  
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.  
We descended, I preceding;  
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;  
All the world was at the chase,  
The court-yard like a desert-place,  
The stable emptied of its small fry;  
I saddled myself the very palfrey  
I remember patting while it carried her,  
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.  
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving  
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing  
The Lady had not forgotten it either,  
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her  
Would have been only too glad for her service  
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,  
But unable to pay proper duty where owing it  
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:  
For though the moment I began setting  
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,  
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)  
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,  
By a single rapid finger's lifting,  
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,

And a little shake of the head, refused me,—  
 I say, although she never used me,  
 Yet when she was mounted, the Gypsy behind her,  
 And I ventured to remind her,  
 I suppose with a voice of less steadiness  
 Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,  
 —Something to the effect that I was in readiness  
 Whenever God should please she needed me,—  
 Then, do you know, her face looked down on me  
 With a look that placed a crown on me,  
 And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom,—  
 And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,  
 Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse  
 Of silver, my friend, or gold, that 's worse,  
 Why, you see, as soon as I found myself  
 So understood,—that a true heart so may gain  
 Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,  
 Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!  
 It was a little plait of hair  
 Such as friends in a convent make  
 To wear, each for the other's sake,—  
 This, see, which at my breast I wear,  
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging),  
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.  
 And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,  
 These are feelings it is not good to foster,—  
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,  
 And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her!

XVI.

When the liquor 's out, why, clink the cannakin?  
 I did think to describe you the panic in  
 The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,  
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,  
 How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib  
 Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,  
 When she heard, what she called, the flight of the feloness—  
 But it seems such child's play  
 What they said and did with the Lady away!  
 And to dance on, when we 've lost the music,  
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.  
 Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern  
 As that sweet form disappeared thro' the postern,  
 She that kept it in constant good humour,  
 It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.  
 But the world thought otherwise and went on,  
 And my head's one that its spite was spent on:

Thirty years are fled since that morning,  
 And with them all my head's adorning.  
 Nor did the old Duchess die outright,  
 As you expect, of suppressed spite,  
 The natural end of every adder  
 Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder :  
 But she and her son agreed, I take it,  
 That no one should touch on the story to wake it,  
 For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,  
 So they made no search and small inquiry—  
 And when fresh Gypsies have paid us a visit, I've  
 Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,  
 But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,  
 And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.  
 Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,  
 And the old one was in the young one's stead,  
 And took, in her place, the household's head,  
 And a blessed time the household had of it !  
 And were I not, as a man may say, cautious  
 How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,  
 I could favour you with sundry touches  
 Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess  
 Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness  
 (To get on faster) until at last her  
 Cheek grew to be one master-plaster  
 Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse,  
 Till in short she grew, from scalp to udder,  
 Just the object to make you shudder !

## XVII.

You're my friend—  
 What a thing friendship is, world without end !  
 How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,  
 As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,  
 And poured out all lovelily, sparkling, and sunlit,  
 Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,  
 Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—  
 Friendship's as good as that monarch of fluids  
 To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-outs,—  
 Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts  
 Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees  
 Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease !  
 I have seen my little Lady once more,  
 Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it,  
 For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before ;  
 I always wanted to make a clean breast of it,  
 And now it is made—why, my heart's-blood, that went trickle,  
 Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets.

Is pumped up brisk now, thro' the main ventricle,  
 And genially floats me about the giblets !  
 I 'll tell you what I intend to do :  
 I must see this fellow his sad life thro'  
 —He is our Duke after all,  
 And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall ;  
 My father was born here and I inherit  
 His fame, a chain he bound his son with,—  
 Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,  
 But there 's no mine to blow up and get done with,  
 So I must stay till the end of the chapter :  
 For, as to our middle-age-manners-adap-ter,  
 Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,  
 One day or other, his head in a morion,  
 And breast in a hauberk, his heels he 'll kick up,  
 Slain by some onslaught fierce of hiccup.  
 And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,  
 And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with a blue crust,  
 Then, I shall scrape together my earnings ;  
 For, you see, in the Churchyard Jacynth reposes,  
 And our children all went the way of the roses—  
 It 's a long lane that knows no turnings—  
 One needs but little tackle to travel in,  
 So, just one stout cloak shall I indue,  
 And for a staff, what beats the javelin  
 With which his boars my father pinned you ?  
 And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,  
 Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,  
 I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly ?  
 Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.  
 What 's a man's age ? He must hurry more, that 's all ;  
 Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold ;  
 When we mind labour, then only, we 're too old—  
 What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul ?  
 And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,  
 (Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)  
 I shall get safely out of the turmoil  
 And arrive one day at the land of the Gypsies  
 And find my Lady, or hear the last news of her  
 From some old thief and son of Lucifer,  
 His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,  
 Sunburned all over like an Æthiop :  
 And when my Cotnar begins to operate,  
 And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,  
 And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,  
 I shall drop in with—as if by accident—  
 “ You never knew, then, how it all ended,  
 “ What fortunes good or bad attended



"The little Lady your Queen befriended?"  
 —And when that's told me, what's remaining?  
 This world's too hard for my explaining—  
 The same wise judge of matters equine  
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-old  
 To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,  
 And for strong Cotnar drank French weak wine,  
 He also must be such a Lady's scorner!  
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau,  
 Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw!  
 —So, I shall find out some snug corner  
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,  
 Turn myself round and bid the world good night;  
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing  
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)  
 To a world where's to be no further throwing  
 Pearls before swine that can't value them. *Alas!*

---

## EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES.

---

### FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time.  
 Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime:  
 Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods  
 Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods;  
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,  
 Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;  
 How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,  
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

---

### LOVE.

So, the year's done with!  
 (*Love me for ever!*)  
 All March begun with!  
 April's endeavour;  
 May-wreaths that bound me  
 June needs must sever!  
 Now snows fall round me,  
 Quenching June's fever—  
 (*Love me for ever!*)

# SONG.

## I.

NAY, but you, who do not love her,  
Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?  
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?  
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,  
And this last fairest tress of all,  
So fair, see, ere I let it fall !

## II.

Because you spend your lives in praising ;  
To praise, you search the wide world over ;  
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,  
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her ?  
Above this tress, and this I touch  
But cannot praise, I love so much !

# THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

MORNING, evening, noon, and night,  
“ Praise God,” sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell :

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, “ Praise God.”

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, “ Well done ;  
“ I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

“ As well as if thy voice to-day  
“ Were praising God, the Pope’s great way.

“ This Easter-Day, the Pope at Rome  
“ Praises God from Peter’s dome.”

Said Theocrite, “ Would God that I  
“ Might praise Him, that great way, and die ! ”

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, “ Nor day nor night  
“ Now brings the voice of my delight.”

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow’s birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered in flesh the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsman well :

And morning, evening, noon, and night,  
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy to youth he grew :  
The man put off the stripling’s hue :

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay :

And ever o’er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God’s will ; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, “ A praise is in mine ear ;  
“ There is no doubt in it, no fear :

“ So sing old worlds, and so  
“ New worlds that from my footstool go.

“ Clearer loves sound other ways :  
“ I miss my little human praise.”

Then forth sprang Gabriel’s wings, off fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell,

'Twas Easter Day : he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear  
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,  
And on his sight the angel burned.

" I bore thee from thy craftman's cell,  
" And set thee here ; I did not well.

" Vainly I left my angel's-sphere,  
" Vain was thy dream of many a year.

" Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped—  
" Creation's chorus stopped !

" Go back and praise again  
" The early way—while I remain.

" With that weak voice of our disdain,  
" Take up Creation's pausing strain.

" Back to the cell and poor employ :  
" Become the craftsman and the boy ! "

Theocrite grew old at home ;  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died :  
They sought God side by side.

## MEETING AT NIGHT.

---

### I.

The grey sea and the long black land ;  
 And the yellow half-moon large and low ;  
 And the startled little waves that leap  
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
 And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

### II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;  
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;  
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
 And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
 And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,  
 Than the two hearts beating each to each !

---

## PARTING AT MORNING.

---

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,  
 And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—  
 And straight was a path of gold for him,  
 And the need of a world of men for me.

---

## SAUL.

---

SAID Abner, " At last thou art come  
 " Ere I tell, ere thou speak,—  
 " Kiss my cheek, wish me well ! " Then I wished it,  
 And did kiss his cheek :  
 And he, " Since the King, oh, my friend,  
 " For thy countenance sent,  
 Nor drunken nor eaten have we ;  
 Nor, until from his tent  
 Thou return with the joyful assurance  
 The King liveth yet,  
 Shall our lip with the honey be brightened,  
 —The water, be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence,  
 A space of three days,  
 No sound hath escaped to thy servants,  
 Of prayer nor of praise,  
 To betoken that Saul and the Spirit  
 Have ended their strife,  
 And that faint in his triumph the monarch  
 Sinks back upon life.

" Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved !  
 God's child, with his dew  
 On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies  
 Still living and blue  
 As thou brak'st them to twine round thy harp-strings,  
 As if no wild heat  
 Were raging to torture the desert ! "

Then I, as was meet,  
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers,  
 And rose on my feet,  
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.  
 The tent was unlooped ;  
 I pulled up the spear that obstructed,  
 And under I stooped ;  
 Hands and knees o'er the slippery grass-patch—  
 All withered and gone—  
 That leads to the second enclosure,  
 I groped my way on,  
 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open ;  
 Then once more I prayed,  
 And opened the foldskirts and entered,  
 And was not afraid ;  
 And spoke, " Here is David, thy servant ! "

And no voice replied ;  
 And first I saw nought but the blackness ;  
 But soon I descried  
 A something more black than the blackness  
 —The vast, the upright  
 Main-prop which sustains the pavilion,—  
 And slow into sight  
 Grew a figure, gigantic, against it,  
 And blackest of all ;—  
 Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,  
 Showed Saul.  
 He stood as erect as that tent-prop ;  
 Both arms stretched out wide  
 On the great cross-support in the centre  
 That goes to each side :

So he bent not a muscle, but hung there  
 As, caught in his pangs  
 And waiting his change, the king-serpent  
 All heavily hangs,  
 Far away from his kind, in the pine,  
 Till deliverance come  
 With the Spring-time,—so agonized Saul,  
 Drear and stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies  
 We twine round its chords  
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide  
 —Those sunbeams like swords!  
 And I first played the tune all our sheep know,  
 As, one after one,  
 So docile they come to the pen-door  
 Till folding be done;  
 —They are white and untorn by the bushes,  
 For lo, they have fed  
 Where the long grasses stifle the water  
 Within the stream's bed:  
 How one after one seeks its lodging,  
 As star follows star  
 Into eve and the blue far above us,  
 —So blue and so far!  
 Then the tune for which quails on the cornland  
 Will leave each his mate  
 To follow the player; then, what makes  
 The crickets elate  
 Till for boldness they fight one another:  
 And then, what has weight  
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing  
 Outside his sand house  
 —There are none such as he for a wonder—  
 Half bird and half mouse!  
 —God made all the creatures and gave them  
 Our love and our fear,  
 To show, we and they are his children,  
 One family here.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,  
 Their wine-song, when hand  
 Grasps hand, eye lights eye in good friendship,  
 And great hearts expand,  
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life;  
 And then, the low song  
 When the dead man is praised on his journey—  
 “Bear, bear him along

" With his few faults shut up like dead flowrets ;  
 " Are balm-seeds not here  
 " To console us ? The land is left none such  
 " As he on the bier—  
 " Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother !"  
 And then, the glad chaunt  
 Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,  
 Next, she whom we vaunt  
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling :  
 And then, the great march  
 When man runs to man to assist him,  
 And buttress an arch  
 Nought can break . . who shall harm them, our friends ?  
 Then, the chorus intoned  
 As the Levites go up to the altar  
 In glory enthroned—  
 But I stopped here—for here, in the darkness,  
 Saul groaned.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence !  
 And listened apart ;  
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—  
 And sparkles 'gan dart  
 From the jewels that woke in his turban  
 —At once with a start  
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies  
 Courageous at heart ;  
 So the head—but the body still moved not,  
 Still hung there erect.  
 And I bent once again to my playing,  
 Pursued it unchecked,  
 As I sang, " Oh, our manhood's prime vigour !  
 —No spirit feels waste,  
 No muscle is stopped in its playing,  
 No sinew unbraced ;—  
 And the wild joys of living ! The leaping  
 From rock up to rock—  
 The rending their boughs from the palm-trees,—  
 The cool silver shock  
 Of a plunge in the pool's living water—  
 The haunt of the bear,  
 And the sultriness showing the lion  
 Is couched in his lair :  
 And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over  
 With gold dust divine,  
 And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher,  
 The full draught of wine,  
 And the sleep in the dried river channel



Where tall rushes tell  
 The water was wont to go warbling  
 So softly and well,—  
 How good is man's life here, mere living!  
 How fit to employ  
 The heart and the soul and the senses  
 For ever in joy!  
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father  
 Whose sword thou didst guard  
 When he trusted thee forth to the wolf hunt  
 For glorious reward?  
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother  
 Held up, as men sung  
 The song of the nearly-departed,  
 And heard her faint tongue  
 Joining in while it could to the witness  
 "Let one more attest,  
 "I have lived, seen God's hand thro' that life-time,  
 "And all was for best. . ."  
 Then they sung thro' their tears, in strong triumph,  
 Not much,—but the rest!  
 And thy brothers—the help and the contest,  
 The working whence grew  
 Such result, as from seething grape-bundles  
 The spirit so true:  
 And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood  
 With wonder and hope,  
 Present promise, and wealth in the future,—  
 The eye's eagle scope,—  
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch,  
 A people is thine!  
 Of all gifts the world offers singly,  
 On one head combine,  
 On one head the joy and the pride,  
 Even rage like the throe  
 That opes the rock, helps its glad labour,  
 And lets the gold go—  
 And ambition that sees a sun lead it—  
 Oh, all of these—all  
 Combine to unite in one creature  
 —Saul!

TIME'S REVENGES.

---

I 'VE a Friend, over the sea ;  
 I like him, but he loves me ;  
 It all grew out of the books I write ;  
 They find such favour in his sight  
 That he slaughters you with savage looks  
 Because you don't admire my books :  
 He does himself though,—and if some vein  
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,  
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,  
 Round should I just turn quietly,  
 Or out of the bed-clothes stretch my hand  
 Till I found him, come from his foreign land  
 To be my nurse in this poor place,  
 And make me broth and wash my face,  
 And light my fire, and, all the while,  
 Bear with his old good-humoured snile  
 That I told him, “ Better have kept away  
 “ Than come and kill me, night and day,  
 “ With worse than fever's throbs and shoots,  
 “ At the creaking of his clumsy boots.”  
 I am as sure that this he would do,  
 As that Saint Paul's is striking Two :  
 And I think I had rather . . woe is me !  
 —Yes, rather see him than not see,  
 If lifting a hand would seat him there  
 Before me in the empty chair  
 To-night, when my head aches indeed,  
 And I can neither think, nor read,  
 And these blue fingers will not hold  
 The pen ; this garret's freezing cold !

And I've a Lady—There he wakes,  
 The laughing fiend and prince of snakes  
 Within me, at her name, to pray  
 Fate send some creature in the way  
 Of my love for her, to be down-torn,  
 Upthrust and onward borne,  
 So I might prove myself that sea  
 Of passion which I needs must be !  
 Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint  
 And my style infirm, and its figures faint,

All the critics say, and more blame yet,  
 And not one angry word you get !  
 But please you, wonder I would put  
 My cheek beneath that Lady's foot  
 Rather than trample under mine  
 The laurels of the Florentine,  
 And you shall see how the Devil spends  
 A fire God gave for other ends !  
 I tell you, I stride up and down  
 This garret, crowned with love's best crown,  
 And feasted with love's perfect feast,  
 To think I kill for her, at least,  
 Body and soul and peace and fame,  
 Alike youth's end and manhood's aim  
 —So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,  
 Filled full, eaten out and in  
 With the face of her, the eyes of her,  
 The lips and little chin, the stir  
 Of shadow round her mouth ; and she  
 —I'll tell you,—calmly would decree  
 That I should roast at a slow fire,  
 If that would compass her desire  
 And make her one whom they invite  
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be Heaven ; there must be Hell ;  
 Meantime, there is our Earth here—well

---

## THE GLOVE.

---

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*.)

" HEIGHO ! " yawned one day King Francis,  
 " Distance all value enhances !  
 " When a man's busy, why, leisure  
 " Strikes him as wonderful pleasure,—  
 " 'Faith, and at leisure once is he.  
 " Straightway he wants to be busy.  
 " Here we've got peace ; and aghast I'm  
 " Caught thinking war the true pastime !  
 " Is there a reason in metre ?  
 " Give us your speech, Master Peter ! "  
 I who, if mortal dare say so,  
 Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,  
 " Sire," I replied, " joys prove cloudlets :

‘ Men are the merest Ixions ’<sup>2</sup>—  
 Here the King whistled aloud, “ Let ’s  
 “. . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions ! ”  
 Such are the sorrowful chances  
 If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the court-yard proceeding,  
 Our company, Francis was leading,  
 Increased by new followers tenfold  
 Before he arrived at the penfold ;  
 Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen  
 At sunset the western horizon.  
 And Sir De Lorge pressed ’mid the foremost  
 With the dame he professed to adore most—  
 Oh, what a face ! One by fits eyed  
 Her, and the horrible pitside ;  
 For the penfold surrounded a hollow  
 Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,  
 And shelved to the chamber secluded  
 Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.  
 The King hailed his keeper, an Arab  
 As glossy and black as a scarab,  
 And bade him make sport and at once stir  
 Up and out of his den the old monster.  
 They opened a hole in the wire-work  
 Across it, and dropped there a firework,  
 And fled ; one’s heart’s beating redoubled ;  
 A pause, while the pit’s mouth was troubled,  
 The blackness and silence so utter,  
 By the firework’s slow sparkling and sputter ;  
 Then earth in a sudden contortion  
 Gave out to our gaze her abortion !  
 Such a brute ! Were I friend Clement Marot  
 (Whose experience of nature’s but narrow,  
 And whose faculties move in no small mist  
 When he versifies David the Psalmist)  
 I should study that brute to describe you  
*Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu !*  
 One’s whole blood grew curdling and creepy  
 To see the black mane, vast and heapy,  
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,  
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,  
 As over the barrier which bounded  
 His platform, and us who surrounded  
 The barrier, they reached and they rested  
 On the space that might stand him in best stead :  
 For who knew, he thought, what the amazement  
 The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,

And if, in this minute of wonder,  
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,  
 Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,  
 The lion at last was delivered?  
 Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!  
 And you saw by the flash on his forehead,  
 By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,  
 He was leagues in the desert already,  
 Driving the flocks up the mountain,  
 Or catlike couched hard by the fountain  
 To waylay the date-gathering negress:  
 So guarded he entrance or egress.  
 "How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may well swear,  
 "No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere,  
 "And so can afford the confession,  
 "We exercise wholesome discretion  
 "In keeping aloof from his threshold;  
 "Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,  
 "Their first would too pleasantly purloin  
 "The visitor's brisket or surloin:  
 "But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?  
 "Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,  
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,  
 Fell close to the lion, and rested:  
 The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested  
 With life so, De Lorge had been wooing  
 For months past; he sate there pursuing  
 His suit, weighing out with nonchalance  
 Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!  
 De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,  
 Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion  
 Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on  
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire.  
 And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—  
 Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,  
 Leaped back where the lady was seated,  
 And full in the face of its owner  
 Flung the glove—

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?"  
 "So should I"—cried the King—" 'twas mere vanity,  
 "Not love, set that task to humanity!"  
 Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing  
 From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression  
 In her brow's undisturbed self-possession  
 Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—  
 As if from no pleasing experiment  
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful  
 So long as the process was needful—  
 And if she had tried in a crucible,  
 To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,  
 And, finding the finest prove copper,  
 Felt the smoke in her face was but proper ;  
 To know what she had *not* to trust to,  
 Was worth all the ashes, and dust too.  
 She went out 'mid hooting and laughter ;  
 Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,  
 And asked, as a grace, what it all meant—  
 If she wished not the rash deed's recallment ?  
 "For I"—so I spoke—"am a Poet :  
 "Human nature,—behooves that I know it !"

She told me, "Too long had I heard  
 "Of the deed proved alone by the word :  
 "For my love,—what De Lorge would not dare !  
 "With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare .  
 "And the endless descriptions of death  
 "He would brave when my lip formed a breath,  
 "I must reckon as braved, or, of course,  
 "Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,  
 "For such gifts as no lady could spurn,  
 "Must offer my love in return.  
 "When I looked on your lion, it brought  
 "All the dangers at once to my thought,  
 "Encountered by all sorts of men,  
 "Before he was lodged in his den,—  
 "From the poor slave whose club or bare hands  
 "Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,  
 "With no King and no Court to applaud,  
 "By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,  
 "Yet to capture the creature made shift,  
 "That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,  
 "To the page who last leaped o'er the fence  
 "Of the pit, on no greater pretence  
 "Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,  
 "Lest his pay for a week should be stopped—  
 "So, wiser I judged it to make  
 "One trial what 'death for my sake'  
 "Really meant, while the power was yet mine.  
 "Than to wait until time should define

"Such a phrase not so simply as I,  
 "Who took it to mean just 'to die.'  
 "The blow a glove gives is but weak—  
 "Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?  
 "But when the heart suffers a blow,  
 "Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,  
 And saw a youth eagerly keeping  
 As close as he dared to the doorway:  
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh  
 His life than befits a plebeian;  
 And yet, had our brute been Nemean—  
 (I judge by a certain calm fervour  
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)  
 —He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn  
 If you whispered "Friend, what you'd get, first earn!"  
 And when, shortly after, she carried  
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,  
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre  
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,  
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;  
 And in short stood so plain a head taller  
 That he wooed and won . . . How do you call her?  
 The beauty, that rose in the sequel  
 To the King's love, who loved her a week well;  
 And 'twas noticed he never would honour  
 De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)  
 With the easy commission of stretching  
 His legs in the service, and fetching  
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying  
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,  
 While the King took the closet to chat in,—  
 But of course this adventure came pat in;  
 And never the King told the story,  
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,  
 But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown firmer—  
 "Mine he brings now and utters no murmur!"

*Venienti occurrere morbo!*

With which moral I drop my theorbo.

## CLARET AND TOKAY.

---

### I.

My heart sunk with our Claret-flask,  
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges  
That serve this pond's black face for mask ;  
And still at yonder broken edges  
Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,  
After my heart I look and listen.

### II.

Our laughing little flask, compell'd  
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady ;  
As when, both arms beside her held,  
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady  
Is caught up from Life's light and motion,  
And dropped into Death's silent ocean !

Up jumped Tokay on our table,  
Like a pygmy castle-warder,  
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,  
Arms and accoutrements all in order ;  
And fierce he looked north, then, wheeling south,  
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,  
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,  
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,  
Gingled his huge brass spurs together,  
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,  
And then with an impudence nought could abash,  
Shrugged his hump-shoulder,  
To tell the beholder,  
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder,  
And so with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,  
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,  
Went the little man from Ausbruch, strutting !





## PAULINE :

*A Fragment of a Confession.*

---

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,  
ne ie sçaurois jamais être. —MARIVAUX.

NON AUARO, quia titulus libri nostri raritate sua quamplurimos auiciat ad legendum : inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temeraria sua ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt : Nos votita docere, hæresium semina jacere : plis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse : . . . adeo conscientia suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant : quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint : nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt : Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro. lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui aequa mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite. . . . Ideo, si quid liberior dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—*H. Cor. Agrippa, De Occult. Phil.*

LONDON, *January*, 1833.

V. A. XX.

## PAULINE :

### *A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.*



PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast  
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes,  
And loosened hair, and breathing lips, and arms  
Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen  
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear,  
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood  
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking place,  
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return  
To one so watched, so loved, and so secured.  
But what can guard thee but thy naked love ?  
Ah, dearest ! whoso sucks a poisoned wound  
Envenoms his own veins,—thou art so good,  
So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow less light  
For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept  
From out thy soul, as from a sacred star.  
Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain  
To hope to sing ; some woe would light on me ;  
Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip  
Was bathed in her enchantments—whose brow burned  
Beneath the crown, to which her secrets knelt ;  
Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,  
And then departed, smiling like a fiend  
Who has deceived God. If such one should seek  
Again her altars, and stand robed and crowned  
Amid the faithful : sad confession first,  
Remorse and pardon, and old claims renewed,  
Ere I can be—as I shall be no more.  
I had been spared this shame, if I had sate  
By thee for ever, from the first, in place  
Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,  
Or with them, as an earnest of their truth.  
No thought nor hope, having been shut from thee,

No vague wish unexplained—no wandering aim  
Sent back to bind on Fancy's wings, and seek  
Some strange fair world, where it might be a law;  
But doubting nothing, had been led by thee,  
Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length awaked,  
Who has slept thro' a peril. Ah! vain, vain!

Thou lovest me—the past is in its grave,  
Tho' its ghost haunts us—still this much is ours,  
To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing  
Wait for us in the darkness. Thou lovest me,  
And thou art to receive not love, but faith,  
For which thou wilt be mine, and smile, and take  
All shapes, and shames, and veil without a fear  
That form which music follows like a slave;  
And I look to thee, and I trust in thee,  
As in a Northern night one looks alway  
Unto the East for morn, and spring and joy.  
Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,  
And resting on some few old feelings, won  
Back by thy beauty, would'st that I essay  
The task, which was to me what now thou art:  
And why should I conceal one weakness more?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when Winter  
Crept aged from the earth, and Spring's first breath  
Blew soft from the moist hills—the black-thorn boughs,  
So dark in the bare wood; when glistening  
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,  
Like the bright side of a sorrow—and the banks  
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes—  
I walked with thee, who knew not a deep shame  
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words, which sought  
To hide it—till they wandered and were mute;  
As we stood listening on a sunny mound  
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,  
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing  
Betrayed by sleep—until the feeling rushed  
'That I was low indeed, yet not so low  
As to endure the calmness of thine eyes;  
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast  
I leaned on altered not its quiet beating;  
And long ere words, like a hurt bird's complaint,  
Bade me look up and be what I had been,  
I felt despair could never live by thee.  
Thou wilt remember :—thou art not more dear  
Than song was once to me; and I ne'er sung  
But as one entering bright halls, where all

Will rise and shout for him. Sure I must own  
 That I am fallen—having chosen gifts  
 Distinct from theirs—that I am sad—and fain  
 Would give up all to be but where I was ;  
 Not high as I had been, if faithful found—  
 But low and weak, yet full of hope, and sure  
 Of goodness as of life—that I would lose  
 All this gay mastery of mind, to sit  
 Once more with them, trusting in truth and love,  
 And with an aim—not being what I am.

Oh, Pauline ! I am ruined ! who believed  
 That tho' my soul had floated from its sphere  
 Of wide dominion into the dim orb  
 Of self—that it was strong and free as ever :—  
 It has conformed itself to that dim orb,  
 Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now  
 Must stay where it alone can be adored.  
 I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which  
 I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt  
 A strange delight in causing my decay ;  
 I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever  
 Within some ocean-cave ; and ages rolled,  
 Till thro' the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came  
 A white swan to remain with me ; and ages  
 Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy  
 In gazing on the peace of its pure wings.  
 And then I said, "It is most fair to me,  
 "Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change  
 "From the thick darkness—sure its eyes are dim—  
 "Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed  
 "With sleeping ages here ; it cannot leave me,  
 "For it would seem, in light, beside its kind,  
 "Withered—tho' here to me most beautiful."  
 And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes,  
 As she stood naked by the river springs,  
 Drew down a god—I watched his radiant form  
 Growing less radiant—and it gladdened me ;  
 Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine  
 Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,  
 He turned to look at me, ere I could lose  
 The grin with which I viewed his perishing.  
 And he shrieked and departed, and sat long  
 By his deserted throne—but sunk at last,  
 Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled  
 Around him, "I am still a god—to thee."  
 Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,  
 For all the wandering and all the weakness

Will be a saddest comment on the song.  
 And if, that done, I can be young again,  
 I will give up all gained as willingly  
 As one gives up a charm which shuts him out  
 From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.  
 As life wanes, all its cares, and strife, and toil,  
 Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees  
 Which grew by our youth's home—the waving mass  
 Of climbing plants, heavy with bloom and dew—  
 The morning swallows with their songs like words, —  
 All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts.  
 So aught connected with my early life—  
 My rude songs or my wild imaginings,  
 How I look on them—most distinct amid  
 The fever and the stir of after years !

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,  
 Had not the glow I felt at His award,  
 Assured me all was not extinct within.  
 Him whom all honor—whose renown springs up  
 Like sunlight which will visit all the world ;  
 So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,  
 Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls  
 From his foul nets, which some lit torch invades,  
 Yet spinning still new films for his retreat. —  
 Thou didst smile, poet,—but, can *we* forgive ?

Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever ;  
 Thou art gone from us—years go by—and spring  
 Gladdens, and the young earth is beautiful,  
 Yet thy songs come not—other bards arise,  
 But none like thee—they stand—thy majesties,  
 Like mighty works which tell some Spirit there  
 Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,  
 Till, its long task completed, it hath risen  
 And left us, never to return : and all  
 Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.  
 The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,  
 But thou art still for me, as thou hast been  
 When I have stood with thee, as on a throne  
 With all thy dim creations gathered round  
 Like mountains,—and I felt of mould like them,  
 And creatures of my own were mixed with them,  
 Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.  
 But thou art still for me, who have adored,  
 Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name,  
 Which I believed a spell to me alone,  
 Scarce deeming thou wert as a star to men—

As one should worship long a sacred spring  
 Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,  
 And one small tree embowers droopingly,  
 Joying to see some wandering insect won,  
 To live in its few rushes—or some locust  
 To pasture on its boughs—or some wild bird  
 Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air,  
 And then should find it but the fountain-head,  
 Long lost, of some great river—washing towns  
 And towers, and seeing old woods which will live  
 But by its banks, untrod of human foot,  
 Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering  
 In light as some thing lieth half of life  
 Before God's foot—waiting a wondrous change  
 —Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay  
 Its course in vain, for it does ever spread  
 Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,  
 Being the pulse of some great country—so  
 Wert thou to me—and art thou to the world.  
 And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,  
 That I am not what I have been to thee :  
 Like a girl one has loved long silently,  
 In her first loveliness, in some retreat,  
 When first emerged, all gaze and glow to view  
 Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips which bleed  
 Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is sweet  
 To see her thus adored—but there have been  
 Moments, when all the world was in his praise,  
 Sweeter than all the pride of after hours.  
 Yet, Sun-treader, all hail !—from my heart's heart  
 I bid thee hail !—e'en in my wildest dreams,  
 I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all  
 The wreathes of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,  
 To have seen thee, for a moment, as thou art.

And if thou livest—if thou lovest, spirit !  
 Remember me, who set this final seal  
 To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou  
 Could never die. Remember me, who flung  
 All honor from my soul—yet paused and said,  
 “ There is one spark of love remaining yet,  
 “ For I have nought in common with him—shapes  
 “ Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms  
 “ Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind ;  
 “ And tho' I feel how low I am to him,  
 “ Yet I aim not even to catch a tone  
 “ Of all the harmonies he called up,  
 “ So one gleam still remains, altho' the last.”



Remember me—who praise thee e'en with tears,  
 For never more shall I walk calm with thee ;  
 Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,  
 A melody, some wond'rous singer sings,  
 Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,  
 They dream not to essay ; yet it no less,  
 But more is honored. I was thine in shame,  
 And now when all thy proud renown is out,  
 I am a watcher, whose eyes have grown dim  
 With looking for some star—which breaks on him,  
 Altered, and worn, and weak, and full of tears.

Autumn has come—like Spring returned to us,  
 Won from her girlishness—like one returned  
 A friend that was a lover—nor forgets  
 The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts  
 Of fading years ; whose soft mouth quivers yet  
 With the old smile—but yet so changed and still !  
 And here am I the scoffer, who have probed  
 Life's vanity, won by a word again  
 Into my old life—for one little word  
 Of this sweet friend, who lives in loving me,  
 Lives strangely on my thoughts, and looks, and words,  
 As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing  
 Its silent course of quietness and joy.  
 O dearest, if, indeed, I tell the past,  
 May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream ;  
 Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon  
 Sinks to itself, and whispers, we shall be  
 But closer linked—two creatures whom the earth  
 Bears singly—with strange feelings, unrevealed  
 But to each other ; or two lonely things  
 Created by some Power, whose reign is done,  
 Having no part in God, or his bright world,  
 I am to sing ; whilst ebbing day dies soft,  
 As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book,  
 And in the heaven stars steal out one by one,  
 As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.  
 I must not think—lest this new impulse die  
 In which I trust. I have no confidence,  
 So I will sing on—fast as fancies come  
 Rudely—the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare—whose first elements  
 I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth  
 In infancy nor as they now exist,  
 That I am grown above them, and can rule them,  
 But in that middle stage, when they were full,

Yet ere I had disposed them to my will ;  
 And then I shall show how these elements  
 Produced my present state, and what it is.  
 I am made up of an intensest life,  
 Of a most clear idea of consciousness  
 Of self—distinct from all its qualities,  
 From all affections, passions, feelings, powers ;  
 And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,  
 But linked in me, to self-supremacy,  
 Existing as a centre to all things,  
 Most potent to create, and rule, and call  
 Upon all things to minister to it ;  
 And to a principle of restlessness  
 Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—  
 This is myself ; and I should thus have been,  
 Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save  
 From utter death a soul with such desires  
 Confined to clay—which is the only one  
 Which marks me—an imagination which  
 Has been an angel to me—coming not  
 In fitful visions, but beside me ever,  
 And never failing me ; so tho' my mind  
 Forgets not—not a shred of life forgets—  
 Yet I can take a secret pride in calling  
 The dark past up—to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,  
 But I have always had one lode-star ; now,  
 As I look back, I see that I have wasted,  
 Or progressed as I looked toward that star—  
 A need, a trust, a yearning after God,  
 A feeling I have analysed but late,  
 But it existed, and was reconciled  
 With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,  
 Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.  
 I felt as one beloved, and so shut in  
 From fear—and thence I date my trust in signs  
 And omens—for I saw God every where ;  
 And I can only lay it to the fruit  
 Of a sad after-time that I could doubt  
 Even his being—having always felt  
 His presence—never acting from myself,  
 Still trusting in a hand that leads me through  
 All danger ; and this feeling still has fought  
 Against my weakest reason and resolves.

And I can love nothing—and this dull truth  
Has come the last—but sense supplies a love  
Encircling me and mingling with my life.

These make myself—I have sought in vain  
To trace how they were formed by circumstance,  
For I still find them—turning my wild youth  
Where they alone displayed themselves, converting  
All objects to their use—now see their course !

They came to me in my first dawn of life,  
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books,  
All halo-girt with fancies of my own,  
And I myself went with the tale—a god,  
Wandering after beauty—or a giant,  
Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter,  
Talking with gods—or a high-crested chief,  
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos ;—  
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear  
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives.  
I had not seen a work of lofty art,  
Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's face,  
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those  
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea :  
The deep groves, and white temples, and wet caves—  
And nothing ever will surprise me now—  
Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,  
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

An' strange it is, that I who could so dream,  
Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath—  
Aught low, or painful, but I never doubted ;  
So as I grew, I rudely shaped my life  
To my immediate wants, yet strong beneath  
Was a vague sense of powers folded up—  
A sense that tho' those shadowy times were past,  
Their spirit dwelt in me, and I should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down  
My soul, till it was changed. I lost myself,  
And were it not that I so loathe that time,  
I could recall how first I learned to turn  
My mind against itself ; and the effects,  
In deeds for which remorse were vain, as for  
The wanderings of delirious dream ; yet thence  
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which so long  
Have spotted me—at length I was restored,  
Yet long the influence remained ; and nought

But the still life I led, apart from all,  
 Which left my soul to seek its old delights,  
 Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.  
 As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit :  
 And song rose—no new impulse—but the one  
 With which all others best could be combined.  
 My life has not been that of those whose heaven  
 Was lampless, save where poesy shone out ;  
 But as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops,  
 And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,  
 Give back reflected the far-flashing sun ;  
 For music, (which is earnest of a heaven,  
 Seeing we know emotions strange by it,  
 Not else to be revealed,) is as a voice,  
 A low voice calling Fancy, as a friend,  
 To the green woods in the gay summer time.  
 And she fills all the way with dancing shapes,  
 Which have made painters pale ; and they go on  
 While stars look at them, and winds call to them,  
 As they leave life's path for the twilight world,  
 Where the dead gather. This was not at first  
 For I scarce knew what I would do. I had  
 No wish to paint, no yearning—but I sang.

And first I sang, as I in dream have seen,  
 Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,  
 Yet singing to herself until it came.  
 I turned to those old times and scenes, where all  
 That's beautiful had birth for me, and made  
 Rude verses on them all ; and then I paused—  
 I had done nothing, so I sought to know  
 What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine  
 As I gazed on the works of mighty bards,  
 In the first joy at finding my own thoughts  
 Recorded, and my powers exemplified,  
 And feeling their aspirings were my own.  
 And then I first explored passion and mind ;  
 And I began afresh ; I rather sought  
 To rival what I wondered at, than form  
 Creations of my own ; so much was light  
 Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

I paused again—a change was coming on,  
 I was no more a boy—the past was breaking  
 Before the coming, and like fever worked.  
 I first thought on myself—and here my powers  
 Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed  
 On all things : schemes and systems went and came,

And I was proud (being vainest of the weak),  
 In wandering o'er them, to seek out some one  
 To be my own ; as one should wander o'er  
 The white way for a star.

On one, whom praise of mine would not offend,  
 Who was as calm as beauty—being such  
 Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,  
 Believing in them, and devoting all  
 His soul's strength to their winning back to peace ;  
 Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake,  
 Clothed in all passion's melodies, which first  
 Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet task,  
 To gather every breathing of his songs.  
 And woven with them there were words, which seemed  
 A key to a new world ; the muttering  
 Of angels, of some thing unguessed by man.  
 How my heart beat, as I went on, and found  
 Much there ! I felt my own mind had conceived,  
 But there living and burning ; soon the whole  
 Of his conceptions dawned on me ; their praise  
 Is in the tongues of men ; men's brows are high  
 When his name means a triumph and a pride ;  
 So my weak hands may well forbear to dim  
 What then seemed my bright fate : I threw myself  
 To meet it. I was vowed to liberty,  
 Men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven.  
 And I—ah ! what a life was mine to be,  
 My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,  
 I shall go mad, if I recall that time.

O let me look back, e'er I leave for ever  
 The time, which was an hour, that one waits  
 For a fair girl, that comes a withered hag.  
 And I was lonely,—far from woods and fields,  
 And amid dullest sights, who should be loose  
 As a stag—yet I was full of joy—who lived  
 With Plato—and who had the key to life.  
 And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,  
 And many a thought did I build up on thought,  
 As the wild bee hangs cell to cell—in vain ;  
 For I must still go on : my mind rests not.  
 'Twas in my plan to look on real life,  
 Which was all new to me ; my theories  
 Were firm, so I left them, to look upon  
 Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys  
 And, as I pondered on them all, I sought

How best life's end might be attained—an end  
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly, without heart-wreck, I awoke  
As from a dream—I said, 'twas beautiful,  
Yet but a dream; and so adieu to it.  
As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow  
Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees,  
Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,  
And laughing fairy creatures peeping over,  
And on the morrow, when he comes to live  
For ever by those springs, and trees, fruit-flushed  
And fairy bowers—all his search is vain.

Well I remember . . .

First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,  
And faith in them—then freedom in itself,  
And virtue in itself—and then my motives' ends,  
And powers and loves; and human love went last.  
I felt this no decay, because new powers  
Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,  
And happiness; for I had oft been sad,  
Mistrusting my resolves: but now I cast  
Hope joyously away—I laughed and said,  
“No more of this”—I must not think; at length  
I look'd again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater—as some temple seemed  
My soul, where nought is changed, and incense rolls  
Around the altar—only God is gone,  
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat!  
So I passed through the temple; and to me  
Knelt troops of shadows; and they cried, “Hail, king.”  
“We serve thee now and thou shalt serve no more!”  
“Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee!”  
And I said, “Are ye strong—let fancy bear me  
“Far from the past.”—And I was borne away  
As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,  
O'er deserts, towers, and forests, I being calm;  
And I said, “I have nursed up energies,  
“They will prey on me.” And a band knelt low,  
And cried, “Lord, we are here, and we will make  
“A way for thee—in thine appointed life  
“O look on us!” And I said, “Ye will worship  
“Me; but my heart must worship too.” They shouted,  
“Thyself—thou art our king!” So I stood there  
Smiling \* \* \* \* \*

And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit  
 With which I looked out how to end my days ;  
 I felt once more myself—my powers were mine ;  
 I found that youth or health so lifted me,  
 That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief  
 Came nigh me—I must ever be light-hearted ;  
 And that this feeling was the only veil  
 Betwixt me and despair : so if age came,  
 I should be as a wreck linked to a soul  
 Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and aware  
 Of my decay. So a long summer morn  
 Found me ; and e'er noon came, I had resolved  
 No age should come on me, ere youth's hopes went,  
 For I would wear myself out—like that morn  
 Which wasted not a sunbeam—every joy  
 I would make mine, and die ; and thus I sought  
 To chain my spirit down, which I had fed  
 With thoughts of fame. I said, the troubled life  
 Of genius seen so bright when working forth  
 Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain—  
 Most sad, when men have parted with all joy  
 For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,  
 As an obedient spirit, when delight  
 Came not with her alone, but alters soon,  
 Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to depart,  
 Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.

But I shall never lose her ; she will live  
 Brighter for such seclusion—I but catch  
 A hue, a glance of what I sing ; so pain  
 Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell  
 The radiant sights which dazzle me ; but now  
 They shall be all my own, and let them fade  
 Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast.  
 And when all's done, the few dim gleams transferred,-  
 (For a new thought sprung up—that it were well  
 To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave such lays  
 As would encircle me with praise and love ;  
 So I should not die utterly—I should bring  
 One branch from the gold forest, like the knight  
 Of old tales, witnessing I had been there,)—  
 And when all's done, how vain seems e'en success,  
 And all the influence poets have o'er men !  
 'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as myself,  
 Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words  
 He utters in his solitude shall move  
 Men like a swift wind—that tho' he be forgotten,  
 Fair eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams

Of love come true in happier frames than his.  
 Ay, the still night brought thoughts like these, but morn  
 Came, and the mockery again laughed out  
 At hollow praises, and smiles, almost sneers ;  
 And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me  
 To dwell with him and his unhonoured name—  
 And I well knew my spirit, that would be  
 First in the struggle, and again would mak  
 All bow to it ; and I would sink again.

And then know that this curse will come on us,  
 To see our idols perish—we may wither,  
 Nor marvel—we are clay ; but our low fate  
 Should not extend them, whom trustingly  
 We sent before into Time's yawning gulf,  
 To face what e'er may lurk in darkness there—  
 To see the painters' glory pass, and feel  
 Sweet music move us not as once, or worst,  
 To see decaying wits ere the frail body  
 Decays. Nought makes me trust in love so really,  
 As the delight of the contented lowness  
 With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for ever  
 In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them ;  
 I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's best blood,  
 Withering unseen, that they might flourish still.

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not forget  
 How this mood swayed me, when thou first wert mine,  
 When I had set myself to live this life,  
 Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest  
 I was most happy, sweet, for old delights  
 Had come like birds again ; music, my life,  
 I nourished more than ever, and old lore  
 Loved for itself, and all it shows—the king  
 Treading the purple calmly to his death,  
 —While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,  
 The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,  
 Pile the dim outline of the coming doom,  
 —And him sitting alone in blood, while friends  
 Are hunting far in the sunshine ; and the boy,  
 With his white breast and brow and clustering curls  
 Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard  
 To tell his story ere his reason goes.  
 And when I loved thee, as I've loved so oft,  
 Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and looked in  
 My heart to find some feeling like such love,  
 Believing I was still what I had been ;



And soon I found all faith had gone from me,  
 And the late glow of life—changing like clouds,  
 'Twas not the morn-blush widening into day,  
 But evening, coloured by the dying sun  
 While darkness is quick hastening :—I will tell  
 My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair  
 Cannot come near me—thus it is with me.

Souls alter not, and mine must progress still ;  
 And this I knew not when I flung away  
 My youth's chief aims. I ne'er supposed the loss  
 Of what few I retained ; for no resource  
 Awaits me—now behold the change of all.  
 I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest  
 In its clay prison ; this most narrow sphere—  
 It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires,  
 Which I cannot account for, nor explain,  
 But which I stifle not, being bound to trust  
 All feelings equally—to hear all sides :  
 Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live,  
 Referring to some state or life unknown. . . .

My selfishness is satiated not,  
 It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for  
 All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, is pain ;  
 I envy—how I envy him whose mind  
 Turns with its energies to some one end !  
 To elevate a sect, or a pursuit,  
 However mean—so my still baffled hopes  
 Seek out abstractions I would have but one  
 Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine ;  
 One rapture all my soul could fill—and this  
 Wild feeling places me in dream afar,  
 In some wide country, where the eye can see  
 No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn  
 With shining towers and dwellings. I grow mad  
 Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds  
 Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp them all,  
 But must remain with this vile form. I look  
 With hope to age at last, which quenching much,  
 May let me concentrate the sparks it spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me  
 A craving after knowledge : the sole proof  
 Of a commanding will is in that power  
 Repressed ; for I beheld it in its dawn,  
 That sleepless harpy, with its budding wings,  
 And I considered whether I should yield

All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,  
 Finding a recompence in its wild eyes ;  
 And when I found that I should perish so,  
 I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever ;—  
 And I am left alone with my delights,—  
 So it lies in me a chained thing—still ready  
 To serve me, if I loose its slightest bond—  
 I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,  
 For I cannot so narrow me, but that  
 I still exceed it ; in their elements  
 My love would pass my reason—but since here  
 Love must receive its objects from this earth,  
 While reason will be chainless, the few truths  
 Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell  
 All love below ;—then what must be that love  
 Which, with the object it demands, would quell  
 Reason, tho' it soared with the seraphim ?  
 No—what I feel may pass all human love,  
 Yet fall far short of what my love should be ;  
 And yet I seem more warped in this than aught  
 For here myself stands out more hideously.  
 I can forget myself in friendship, fame,  
 Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

But I begin to know what thing hate is—  
 To sicken, and to quiver, and grow white,  
 And I myself have furnished its first prey.  
 All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will,  
 This selfishness, this still decaying frame . . .  
 But I must never grieve while I can pass  
 Far from such thoughts—as now—Andromeda !  
 And she is with me—years roll, I shall change,  
 But change can touch her not—so beautiful  
 With her dark eyes, earnest and still, and hair  
 Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze ;  
 And one red-beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,  
 Resting upon her eyes and face and hair,  
 As she awaits the snake on the wet beach,  
 By the dark rock, and the white wave just breaking  
 At her feet ; quite naked and alone,—a thing  
 You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that God  
 Will come in thunder from the stars to save her.  
 Let it pass—I will call another change.  
 I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,  
 Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,

And in the wane of life ; yet only so  
 As to call up their fears, and there shall come  
 A time requiring youth's best energies ;  
 And straight I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,  
 And I rise triumphing over my decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm  
 'Twixt what I am and all that I would be.  
 But then to know nothing—to hope for nothing—  
 To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear,  
 Lest, losing them, all's lost, and nought remains.

There's some vile juggle with my reason here—  
 I feel I but explain to my own loss  
 These impulses—they live no less the same.  
 Liberty ! what though I despair—my blood  
 Rose not at a slave's name prouder than now,  
 And sympathy obscured by sophistries.  
 Why have not I sought refuge in myself,  
 But for the woes I saw and could not stay—  
 And love !—do I not love thee, my Pauline ?

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left  
 Utterly loveless—witness this belief  
 In poets, tho' sad change has come there too ;  
 No more I leave myself to follow them :  
 Unconsciously I measure me by them.  
 Let me forget it ; and I cherish most  
 My love of England—how her name—a word  
 Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat

Pauline, I could do any thing—not now—  
 All's fever—but when calm shall come again—  
 I am prepared—I have made life my own—  
 I would not be content with all the change  
 One frame should feel—but I have gone in thought  
 Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all life  
 When it is most alive—where strangest fate  
 New shapes it past surmise—the tales of men  
 Bit by some curse—or in the grasps of doom  
 Half-visible and still increasing round,  
 Or crowning their wide being's general aim. . . .

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,  
 As one breathing his weakness to the ear

Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower ;  
 A slight flower growing alone, and offering  
 Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,  
 Yet joyous and confiding, like the triumph  
 Of a child—and why am I not worthy thee ?

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze  
 Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,  
 Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,  
 Or open in the night of sounds, to look  
 For the dim stars ; I can mount with the bird,  
 Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves  
 And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,  
 Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens—  
 Or like a fish breathe in the morning air  
 In the misty sun-warm water—or with flowers  
 And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun,  
 Just as the storm comes—as a girl would look  
 On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me—see how I could build  
 A home for us, out of the world ; in thought—  
 I am inspired—come with me, Pauline !

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path  
 Between the sullen river and the woods  
 Waving and muttering—for the moonless night  
 Has shaped them into images of life,  
 Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,  
 Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.  
 Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell  
 Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting  
 Of thy soft breasts ; no—we will pass to morning—  
 Morning—the rocks, and valleys, and old woods.  
 How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,—  
 Half in the air, like creatures of the place,  
 Trusting the element—living on high boughs  
 That swing in the wind—look at the golden spray,  
 Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract,  
 Amid the broken rocks—shall we stay here  
 With the wild hawks ?—no, ere the hot noon come  
 Dive we down—safe ;—see this our new retreat  
 Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs.  
 Dark, tangled, old and green—still sloping down  
 To a small pool whose waters lie asleep  
 Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants

And tall trees over-arch to keep us in,  
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,  
And in the dreamy water one small group  
Of two or three strange trees are got together,  
Wondering at all around—as strange beasts herd  
Together far from their own land—all wildness—  
No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all,  
And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters,  
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,  
And old grey stones lie making eddies there ;  
The wild mice cross them dry-shod—deeper in—  
Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in :  
This is the very heart of the woods—all round,  
Mountain-like, heaped above us ; yet even here  
One pond of water gleams—far off the river  
Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but one—  
One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and wound  
Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies  
Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend  
O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,  
And thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out  
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ; farther on,  
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined  
To narrow it ; so, at length, a silver thread  
It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep wood,  
Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss and stone,  
It joins its parent-river with a shout.  
Up for the glowing day—leave the old woods :  
See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky :  
Nothing but sky appears, so close the root  
And grass of the hill-top level with the air—  
Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats, laden  
With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,  
Floating away in the sun in some north sea.  
Air, air—fresh life-blood—thin and searching air—  
The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us :  
Where small birds reel and winds take their delight.  
Water is beautiful, but not like air.  
See, where the solid azure waters lie,  
Made as of thickened air, and down below,  
The fern-ranks, like a forest, spread themselves,  
As tho' each pore could feel the element ;  
Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way—  
Float with me there, Pauline, but not like air.

Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set  
On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains,  
And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest

And peer from their spread boughs. There they wave, looking  
 At the muleteers, who whistle as they go  
 To the merry chime of their morning bells, and all  
 The little smoking cots, and fields, and banks,  
 And copses, bright in the sun ; my spirit wanders.  
 Hedge-rows for me—still, living, hedge-rows, where  
 The bushes close, and clasp above, and keep  
 Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel ;—  
 But my soul saddens when it looks beyond ;  
 I cannot be immortal, nor taste all.  
 O God ! where does this tend—these struggling aims ! \*  
 What would I have ? what is this “ sleep,” which seems  
 To bound all ? can there be a “ waking ” point  
 Of crowning life ? The soul would never rule—  
 It would be first in all things—it would have  
 Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that complete  
 Commanding for commanding sickens it.  
 The last point that I can trace is, rest beneath  
 Some better essence than itself—in weakness ;  
 This is “ myself ”—not what I think should be,  
 And what is that I hunger for but God ?

My God, my God ! let me for once look on thee  
 As tho' nought else existed : we alone.  
 And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark  
 Expands till I can say, “ Even from myself  
 “ I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love thee ;

\* Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment—mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre—celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait que ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce renouement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'appaise par degrés, ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur soi-même.—Et par dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit toute particulière de mon ami rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu—Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakspeare, de Raffaele, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est d'au bien plus à leur conception, qu'à leur mise en execution . . . j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami—et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de bruler ceci ; mais que faire ?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'attendre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où l'on pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée que je ne saisis pas parfaitement lui est peut-être aussi intelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

" I do not plead my rapture in thy works  
 " For love of thee—or that I feel as one  
 " Who cannot die—but there is that in me  
 " Which turns to thee, which loves, or which should love."

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress ?  
 Why have I laboured to put out my life ?  
 Is it not in my nature to adore,  
 And e'en for all my reason do I not  
 Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him ?—*Now*.  
 Can I forego the trust that he loves me ?  
 Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .  
 O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed,  
 I have denied thee calmly—do I not  
 Pant when I read of thy consummate deeds,  
 And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash  
 The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy ?  
 Do I not shake to hear aught question thee ? . . . .

If I am erring save me, madden me,  
 Take from me powers, and pleasures—let me die  
 Ages, so I see thee : I am knit round  
 As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,  
 Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes  
 Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—  
 Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee,  
 In the damp night by weeping Olivet,  
 Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less—  
 Or dying with thee on the lonely cross—  
 Or witnessing thy bursting from the tomb !

A mortal, sin's familiar friend doth here  
 Avow that he will give all earth's reward,  
 But to believe and humbly teach the faith,  
 In suffering, and poverty, and shame,  
 Only believing he is not unloved. . . .

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever !  
 I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up  
 Deserting me : and old shades gathering on ;  
 Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,  
 And chiefly, I am glad that I have said  
 That love which I have ever felt for thee,  
 But seldom told ; our hearts so beat together,  
 That speech is mockery, but when dark hours come ;  
 And I feel sad ; and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange ;  
 A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove.

Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,  
 Which thro' thee I began, and which I end,  
 Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell  
 That I am thine, and more than ever now—  
 That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink,  
 No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss,  
 And that I still may hope to win it back.  
 Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not think all calm,  
 For wild dreams followed me, and bore me off,  
 And all was indistinct. Ere one was caught  
 Another glanced: so dazzled by my wealth,  
 Knowing not which to leave nor which to choose,  
 For all my thoughts so floated, nought was fixed—  
 And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one  
 Who shadowed out the stages of all life,  
 And so thou badest me tell this my first stage;—  
 'Tis done; and even now I feel all dim the shift  
 Of thought. These are my last thoughts; I discern  
 Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good.  
 And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now,  
 In the dim hush of night—that I have done—  
 With fears and sad forebodings: I look thro'  
 And say, "E'en at the last I have her still,  
 "With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven,  
 "When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,  
 "And clouds float white in the sun like broods of swans."  
 How the blood lies upon her cheek, all spread  
 As thinned by kisses; only in her lips  
 It wells and pulses like a living thing,  
 And her neck looks, like marble misted o'er  
 With love-breath, a dear thing to kiss and love,  
 Standing beneath me—looking out to me  
 As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought but me;  
 Leave me not. All these words are wild and weak,  
 Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped so low  
 But to behold thee purer by my side,  
 To show thou art my breath—my life—a last  
 Resource—an extreme want: never believe  
 Aught better could so look to thee, nor seek  
 Again the world of good thoughts left for me.  
 There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,  
 Each equal in their radiant course. There were  
 Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept  
 For his own joy, and his waves broke on them  
 Without a choice. And there was a dim crowd  
 Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.



And a star left his peers and came with peace  
 Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him.  
 And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,  
 And the crew wandered in its bowers, and plucked  
 Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes for home.  
 And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,  
 And he said, "I am singled out by God,  
 "No sin must touch me." I am very weak,  
 But what I would express is,—Leave me not,  
 Still sit by me—with beating breast, and hair  
 Loosened—watching earnest by my side,  
 Turning my books, or kissing me when I  
 Look up—like summer wind. Be still to me  
 A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,  
 A reason, a solution, and a clue.  
 You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules :  
 I hope in myself—and hope, and pant, and love—  
 You'll find me better—know me more than when  
 You loved me as I was. Smile not ; I have  
 Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on you.

No more of the past—I'll look within no more—  
 I have too trusted to my own wild wants—  
 Too trusted to myself—to intuition,  
 Draining the wine alone in the still night,  
 And seeing how—as gathering films arose,  
 As by an inspiration life seemed bare  
 And grinning in its vanity, and ends  
 Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as fixed,  
 And others suddenly became all foul,  
 As a fair witch turned an old hag at night,  
 No more of this—we will go hand in hand,  
 I will go with thee, even as a child,  
 Looking no further than thy sweet commands.  
 And thou hast chosen where this life shall be—  
 The land which gave me thee shall be our home,  
 Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes  
 And snow-swarthed mountains, and vast pines all girt  
 With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare,  
 Suffering none to view her but a race  
 Most stunted and deformed—like the mute dwarfs  
 Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.  
 And there (the time being when the heavens are thick  
 With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing  
 Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird  
 Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,  
 Or telling me old stories of dead knights.  
 Or I will read old lays to thee—how she,

The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave  
 With power to love, and to be loved, and live.  
 Or we will go together, like twin gods  
 Of the infernal world, with scented lamp  
 Over the dead—to call and to awake—  
 Over the unshaped images which lie  
 Within my mind's cave—only leaving all  
 That tells of the past doubts. So when spring comes,  
 And sunshine comes again like an old smile,  
 And the fresh waters, and awakened birds,  
 And budding woods await us—I shall be  
 Prepared, and we will go and think again,  
 And all old loves shall come to us—but changed  
 As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled before ;  
 Feeling God loves us, and that all that errs,  
 Is a strange dream which death will dissipate ;  
 And then when I am firm we'll seek again  
 My own land, and again I will approach  
 My old designs, and calmly look on all  
 The works of my past weakness, as one views  
 Some scene where danger met him long before.  
 Ah ! that such pleasant life should be but dreamed !

But whate'er come of it—and tho' it fade,  
 And tho' ere the cold morning all be gone  
 As it will be ;—tho' music wait for me,  
 And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing like sin,  
 Which steals back softly on a soul half saved ;  
 And I be first to deny all, and despise  
 This verse, and these intents which seem so fair :  
 Still this is all my own, this moment's pride,  
 No less I make an end in perfect joy.  
 E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear  
 Possessed me. I well knew my weak resolves,  
 I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep  
 Over its treasures—as one half afraid  
 To make his riches definite—but now  
 These feelings shall not utterly be lost,  
 I shall not know again that nameless care,  
 Lest leaving all undone in youth, some new  
 And undreamed end reveal itself too late :  
 For this song shall remain to tell for ever,  
 That when I lost all hope of such a change,  
 Suddenly Beauty rose on me again.  
 No less I make an end in perfect joy,  
 For I, having thus again been visited,  
 Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,  
 And tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come,

Some little word shall light it up again,  
And I shall see all clearer and love better ;  
I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,  
As one who has a right ; and I shall live  
With poets—calmer—purer still each time,  
And beauteous shapes will come to me again,  
And unknown secrets will be trusted me,  
Which were not mine when wavering—but now  
I shall be priest and lover, as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,  
And love ; and as one just escaped from death  
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel  
He lives indeed—so, I would lean on thee ;  
Thou must be ever with me—most in gloom  
When such shall come—but chiefly when I die,  
For I seem dying, as one going in the dark  
To fight a giant—and live thou for ever,  
And be to all what thou hast been to me—  
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me,  
Know my last state is happy—free from doubt,  
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well !

RICHMOND,  
*October 22, 1832.*

**CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.**



## CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

---

### CHRISTMAS-EVE.

---

#### I.

OUT of the little chapel I burst  
Into the fresh night air again.  
I had waited a good five minutes first  
In the doorway, to escape the rain  
That drove in gusts down the common's centre,  
At the edge of which the chapel stands,  
Before I plucked up heart to enter :  
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands  
Reached past me, groping for the latch  
Of the inner door that hung on catch,  
More obstinate the more they fumbled,  
Till, giving way at last with a scold  
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled  
One sheep more to the rest in fold,  
And left me irresolute, standing sentry  
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry  
Four feet long by two feet wide,  
Partitioned off from the vast inside—  
I blocked up half of it at least.  
No remedy ; the rain kept driving :  
They eyed me much as some wild beast,  
That congregation, still arriving,  
Some of them by the mainroad, white  
A long way past me into the night,  
Skirting the common, then diverging ;  
Not a few suddenly emerging  
From the common's self thro' the paling—gaps,—  
—They house in the gravel pits perhaps,  
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border  
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder ;—

But the most turned in yet more abruptly  
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,  
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,  
Which now the little chapel rallies  
And leads into day again,—its priestliness  
Lending itself to hide their beastliness  
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),  
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on  
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,  
That, where you cross the common as I did,  
And meet the party thus presided,  
“Mount Zion,” with Love-lane at the back of it,  
They front you as little disconcerted,  
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted  
And her wicked people made to mind him,  
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

## II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,  
In came the flock : the fat weary woman,  
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping  
Her umbrella with a mighty report,  
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,  
A wreck of whalebones ; then, with a snort,  
Like a startled horse, at the interloper  
Who humbly knew himself improper,  
But could not shrink up small enough,  
Round to the door, and in,—the gruff  
Hinge's invariable scold  
Making your very blood run cold.  
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered  
On broken clogs, the many-tattered  
Little old-faced, peaking sister-turned-mother  
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother  
Somehow up, with its spotted face,  
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place :  
She too must stop, wring the poor suds dry  
Of a dragged shawl, and add thereby  
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping  
Already from my own clothes' dropping,  
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on :  
Then stooping down to take off her pattens,  
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,  
Planted together before her breast  
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.  
Close on her heels, the dingy satins  
Of a female something, past me flitted.

With lips as much too white, as a streak  
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek ;

And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied  
All that was left of a woman once,  
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.  
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,  
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,  
And eyelids screwed together tight,  
Led himself in by some inner light.  
And, except from him, from each that entered,  
I had the same interrogation—

“ What, you, the alien, you have ventured

“ To take with us, elect, your station ?

“ A carer for none of it, a Gallio ? ”—

Thus, plain as print, I read the glance  
At a common prey, in each countenance,  
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho :  
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,  
The draught, it always sent in shutting,  
Made the flame of the single tallow candle  
In the cracked square lanthorn I stood under,  
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting,  
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal :  
I verily thought the zealous light  
(In the chapel's secret, too ! ) for spite,  
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,  
With the airs of a St. John's Candlestick.  
There was no standing it much longer.

“ Good folks,” said I, as resolve grew stronger,

“ This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor,

“ When the weather sends you a chance visitor ?

“ You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,

“ And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you !

“ But still, despite the pretty perfection

“ To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,

“ And, taking God's word under wise protection,

“ Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,

“ Bidding one reach it over hot ploughshares,—

“ Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,

“ If I should choose to cry—as now—‘ Shares ! ’—

“ See if the best of you bars me my ration !

“ Because I prefer for my expounder

“ Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder :

“ Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest,

“ Supposing I don the marriage-vestment ;

“ So, shut your mouth, and open your Testament,

“ And carve me my portion at your quickest ! ”

Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad



With wizened face in want of soap,  
 And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,  
 After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,  
 To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,  
 And so avoid disturbing the preacher,  
 Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise  
 At the shutting door, and entered likewise,—  
 Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,  
 Crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,  
 And found myself in full conventicle,  
 —To wit, in Zion's Chapel Meeting,  
 On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,  
 Which, calling its flock to their special clover,  
 Found them assembled and one sheep over,  
 Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

## III.

I very soon had enough of it.  
 The hot smell and the human noises,  
 And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,  
 Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,  
 Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure  
 Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity,  
 As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,  
 To meet his audience's avidity.  
 You needed not the wit of the Sybil  
 To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling—  
 No sooner had our friend an inkling  
 Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,  
 (Whenever it was the thought first struck him  
 How Death, at unawares, might duck him  
 Deeper than the grave, and quench  
 The gin-shop's light in Hell's grim drench),  
 Then he handled it so, in fine irreverence,  
 As to hug the Book of books to pieces :  
 And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,  
 Not improved by the private dog's ears and creases,  
 Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt  
     yours,—  
 So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.  
 And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt :  
 Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours  
 Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours  
 Were help which the world could be saved without,  
 'Tis odds but I had borne in quiet  
 Aqualm or two at my spiritual diet ;

Or, who can tell ? had even mustered  
 Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon :  
 But the flock sate on, divinely flustered,  
 Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon  
 With such content in every snuffle,  
 As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.  
 My old fat woman purred with pleasure,  
 And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,  
 While she, to his periods keeping measure,  
 Maternally devoured the pastor.  
 The man with the handkerchief, untied it,  
 Showed us a horrible wen inside it,  
 Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,  
 And rocked himself as the woman was doing.  
 The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,  
 Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking !  
 My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it,  
 And saying, like Eve when she plucked the apple,  
 " I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,"  
 I flung out of the little chapel.

## IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull  
 In the wind too ; the moon was risen,  
 And would have shone out pure and full,  
 But for the rainparted cloud-prison,  
 Block on block built up in the west,  
 For what purpose the wind knows best,  
 Who changes his mind continually.  
 And the empty other half of the sky  
 Seemed in its silence as if it knew  
 What, any moment, might look through  
 A chance-gap in that fortress massy :—  
 Through its fissures you got hints  
 Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,  
 Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy  
 Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,  
 Like furnace smoke just ere the flames bellow,  
 All a-simmer with intense strain  
 To let her through,—then blank again,  
 At the hope of her appearance failing.  
 Just by the chapel a break in the railing  
 Shows a narrow path directly across ;  
 'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss—  
 Besides, you go gently all the way uphill :  
 I stooped under and soon felt better :

My head grew light, my limbs more supple,  
 As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter;  
 My mind was full of the scene I had left,  
 That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,  
 —How this outside was pure and different!  
 The sermon—now, what a mingled weft  
 Of good and ill! were either less,  
 Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly;  
 But alas for the excellent earnestness,  
 And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,  
 But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,  
 However to pastor and flock's contentment!  
 Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,  
 With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,  
 Till how could you know them, grown double their size,  
 In the natural fog of the good man's mind?  
 Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,  
 Haloed about with the common's damps.  
 Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover;  
 The zeal was good, and the aspiration;  
 And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,  
 Pharaoh received no demonstration  
 By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,  
 Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—  
 Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,  
 Apparently his hearers relished it  
 With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if  
 They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?  
 But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them!  
 These people have really felt, no doubt,  
 A something, the motion they style the Call of them;  
 And this is their method of bringing about,  
 By a mechanism of words and tones,  
 (So many texts in so many groans  
 A sort of reviving or reproducing,  
 More or less perfectly, (who can tell?—)  
 Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using;  
 And how it happens, I understand well.  
 A tune was born in my head last week,  
 Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek  
 Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester;  
 And when, next week, I take it back again,  
 My head will sing to the engine's clack again,  
 While it only makes my neighbour's haunches stir,  
 —Finding no dormant musical sprout  
 In him, as in me, to be jolted out.  
 'Tis the taught already that profit by teaching;  
 He gets no more from the railway's preaching,

Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I,  
Whom therefore the flock casts a jealous eye on.  
Still, why paint over their door "Mount Zion,"  
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

## v.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?  
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,  
Does the selfsame weary thing take place?  
The same endeavour to make you believe,  
And much with the same effect, no more:  
Each method abundantly convincing,  
As I say, to those convinced before,  
But scarce to be swallowed without wincing,  
By the not-as-yet convinced. For me,  
I have my own church equally.  
And in *this* church my faith sprang first!  
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,  
And the wind began again, with a burst  
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound  
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,  
I entered His church-door, Nature leading me)  
—In youth I looked to these very skies,  
And probing their immensities,  
I found God there, His visible power;  
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense  
Of that power, an equal evidence  
That His love, there too, was the nobler dower.  
For the loving worm within its clod,  
Were diviner than a loveless god  
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.  
You know what I mean: God's all, man's nought  
But also, God, whose pleasure brought  
Man into being, stands away  
As it were, an handbreadth off, to give  
Room for the newly-made to live,  
And look at Him from a place apart,  
And use His gifts of brain and heart,  
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.  
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever  
Man's very elements from man,  
Saying, "But all is God's" — whose plan  
Was to create man and then leave him  
Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,  
But able to glorify Him too,  
As a mere machine could never do,

That prayed or praised, all unaware  
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,  
Made perfect as a thing of course.  
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock  
Of love and power as a pin-point rock,  
And, looking to God who ordained divorce  
Of the rock from His boundless continent,  
Sees in His Power made evident,  
Only excess by a million fold  
O'er the power God gave man in the mould.  
For, see : Man's hands, first formed to carry  
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry  
Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain.  
—Advancing in power by one degree ;  
And why count steps through eternity ?  
But Love is the ever springing fountain :  
Man may enlarge or narrow his bed  
For the water's play, but the water head—  
How can he multiply or reduce it ?  
As easy create it, as cause it to cease :  
He may profit by it, or abuse it  
But 'tis not a thing to bear increase  
As power will : be love less or more  
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut  
Or opes it wide as he pleases, but  
Love's sum remains what it was before.  
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love  
As seen through power, ever above  
All modes which make it manifest,  
My soul brought all to a single test—  
That He, the Eternal First and Last,  
Who, in His power, had so surpassed  
All man conceives of what is might,—  
Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,  
—Would prove as infinitely good ;  
Would never, my soul understood,  
With power to work all love desires,  
Bestow e'en less than man requires :  
That He who endlessly was teaching,  
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,  
What love can do in the leaf or stone,  
(So that to master this alone,  
This done in the stone or leaf for me,  
I must go on learning endlessly)  
Would never need that I, in turn,  
Should point him out a defect unheeded,  
And show that God had yet to learn  
What the meanest human creature needed,—

—Not life, to wit, for a few short years,  
 Tracking His way through doubts and fears,  
 While the stupid earth on which I stay  
 Suffers no change, but passive adds  
 Its myriad years to myriads,  
 Though I, He gave it to, decay,  
 Seeing death come and choose about me,  
 And my dearest ones depart without me.  
 No! love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,  
 Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,  
 The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,  
 Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it!  
 And I shall behold Thee, face to face,  
 O God, and in Thy light retrace  
 How in all I loved here, still wast Thou!  
 Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,  
 I shall find as able to satiate  
 The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder  
 Thou art able to quicken and subliminate,  
 With this sky of Thine, that I now walk under,  
 And glory in Thee as thus I gaze,  
 —Thus, thus! oh, let men keep their ways  
 Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine—  
 Be this my way! And this *is* mine!

## VI.

For lo, what think you? suddenly  
 The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky  
 Received at once the full fruition  
 Of the moon's consummate apparition.  
 The black cloud-barricade was riven,  
 Ruined beneath her feet, and driven  
 Deep in the west; while, bare and breathless,  
 North and south and east lay ready  
 For a glorious Thing, that, dauntless, deathless,  
 Sprang across them, and stood steady.  
 'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,  
 From heaven to heaven extending, perfect  
 As the mother-moon's self, full in face.  
 It rose, distinctly at the base  
 With its seven proper colours chorded,  
 Which still, in the rising, were compressed,  
 Until at last they coalesced,  
 And supreme the spectral creature lorded  
 In a triumph of whitest white,—  
 Above which intervened the night.

But above night too, like the next,  
 The second of a wondrous sequence,  
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,  
 Till the heaven of heavens be circumflect,  
 Another rainbow rose, a mightier,  
 Fainter, flushier, and flightier,—  
 Rapture dying along its verge!  
 Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,  
 Whose, from the straining topmost dark,  
 On to the keystone of that arc?

## VII.

This sight was shown me, there and then,—  
 Me, one out of a world of men,  
 Singled, forth, as the chance might hap  
 To another, if in a thunderclap  
 Where I heard noise, and you saw flame.  
 Some one man knew God called his name.  
 For me, I think I said, "Appear!  
 "Good were it to be ever here.  
 "If Thou wilt, let me build to Thee  
 "Service-tabernacles Three,  
 "Where, for ever in Thy presence,  
 "In extatic acquiescence,  
 "Far alike from thriftless learning  
 "And ignorance's undiscerning,  
 "I may worship and remain!"  
 Thus, at the show above me, gazing  
 With upturned eyes, I felt my brain  
 Glutted with the glory, blazing  
 Throughout its whole mass, over and under,  
 Until at length it burst asunder,  
 And out of it bodily there streamed  
 The too-much glory, as it seemed,  
 Passing from out me to the ground,  
 Then palely serpentine round  
 Into the dark with mazy error.

## VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.  
 He was there.  
 He Himself with His human air,  
 On the narrow pathway, just before:  
 I saw the back of Him, no more—

He had left the chapel, then, as I.  
I forgot all about the sky.  
No face : only the sight  
Of a sweepy Garment, vast and white,  
With a hem that I could recognise.  
I felt terror, no surprise :  
My mind filled with the cataract,  
At one bound, of the mighty fact.  
I remembered, He did say  
Doubtless, that, to this world's end,  
Where two or three should meet and pray,  
He would be in the midst, their Friend :  
Certainly He was there with them.  
And my pulses leaped for joy  
Of the golden thought without alloy,  
That I saw His very Vesture's hem.  
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear  
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear,  
And I hastened, cried out while I pressed  
To the salvation of the Vest,  
"But not so, Lord ! It cannot be  
"That Thou, indeed, art leaving me—  
"Me, that have despised Thy friends.  
"Did my heart make no amends ?  
"Thou art the Love of God—above  
"His Power, didst hear me place His Love,  
"And that was leaving the world for Thee !  
"Therefore Thou must not turn from me  
"As if I had chosen the other part.  
"Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.  
"Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test ;  
"Still it should be our very best.  
"I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit,  
"Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,  
"And in beauty, as even we require it—  
"Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,  
"I left but now, as scarcely fitted  
"For Thee : I knew not what I pitied :  
"But, all I felt there, right or wrong,  
"What is it to Thee, who curest sinning ?  
"Am I not weak as Thou art strong ?  
"I have looked to Thee from the beginning,  
"Straight up to Thee through all the world  
"Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled  
"To nothingness on either side :  
"And since the time Thou wast descried,  
"Spite of the weak heart, so have I  
"Lived ever, and so fain would die,



“Living and dying, Thee before !  
 “But if Thou leavest me—”

## IX.

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.  
 When,—have mercy, Lord, on us !  
 The whole Face turned upon me full.  
 And I spread myself beneath it,  
 As when the bleacher spreads, to scethe it  
 In the cleansing sun, his wool,—  
 Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness  
 Some defiled, discoloured web—  
 So lay I, saturate with brightness.  
 And when the flood appeared to ebb,  
 Lo, I was walking, light and swift,  
 With my senses settling fast and steadying,  
 But my body caught up in the whirl and drift  
 Of the Vesture's amplitude, still eddying  
 On, just before me, still to be followed,  
 As it carried me after with its motion :  
 What shall I say ?—as a path were hollowed  
 And a man went weltering through the ocean,  
 Sucked along in the flying wake  
 Of the luminous water-snake.  
 Darkness and cold were cloven, as through  
 I passed, upborne yet walking too.  
 And I turned to myself at intervals,—  
 “So He said, and so it befalls.  
 “God who registers the cup  
 “Of mere cold water, for His sake  
 “To a disciple rendered up,  
 “Disdains not His own thirst to slake  
 “At the poorest love was ever offered :  
 “And because it was my heart I proffered,  
 “With true love trembling at the brim,  
 “He suffers me to follow Him  
 “For ever, my own way,—dispensed  
 “From seeking to be influenced  
 “By all the less immediate ways  
 “That earth, in worships manifold,  
 “Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,  
 “The Garment's hem, which, lo, I hold !”

## X.

And so we crossed the world and stopped.  
 For where am I, in city or plain,

Since I am 'ware of the world again?  
And what is this that rises propped  
With pillars of prodigious girth?  
Is it really on the earth,  
This miraculous Dome of God?  
Has the angel's measuring-rod  
Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,  
'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,  
Meted it out,—and what he meted,  
Have the sons of men completed?  
—Binding, ever as he bade,  
Columns in this colonnade  
With arms wide open to embrace  
The entry of the human race  
To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,  
Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,  
With marble for brick, and stones of price  
For garniture of the edifice?  
Now I see: it is no dream:  
It stands there and it does not seem;  
For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,  
And thus I have read of it in books,  
Often in England, leagues away,  
And wondered how those fountains play,  
Growing up eternally  
Each to a musical water-tree,  
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,  
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,  
To the granite lavers underneath.  
Liar and dreamer in your teeth!  
I, the sinner that speak to you,  
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew  
Both this and more! For see, for see,  
The dark is rent, mine eye is free  
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,  
And I view inside, and all there, all,  
As the swarming hollow of a hive,  
The whole Basilica alive!  
Men in the chancel, body, and nave,  
Men on the pillars' architrave,  
Men on the statues, men on the tombs  
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs  
All fanning in expectation  
Of the main-altar's consummation.  
For see, for see, the rapturous moment  
Approaches, and earth's best endowment  
Blends with heaven's: the taper-fires  
Pant up, the winding brazen spires

Heave loftier yet the baldachin,  
 The incense-gaspings, long kept in,  
 Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant  
 Holds his breath and grovels latent,  
 As if God's hushing finger grazed him,  
 (Like Behemoth when He praised him)  
 At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,  
 Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling  
 On the sudden pavement strewed  
 With faces of the multitude.  
 Earth breaks up, time drops away,  
 In flows heaven, with its new day  
 Of endless life, when He who trod,  
 Very Man and very God,  
 This earth in weakness, shame and pain,  
 Dying the death whose signs remain  
 Up yonder on the accursed tree,—  
 Shall come again, no more to be  
 Of captivity the thrall,  
 But the one God, all in all,  
 King of kings, and Lord of lords,  
 As His servant John received the words,  
 "I died, and live for evermore!"

## XI.

Yet I was left outside the door.  
 Why sate I there on the threshold-stone,  
 Left till He returns, alone  
 Save for the Garment's extreme fold  
 Abandoned still to bless my hold?—  
 My reason, to my doubt, replied,  
 As if a book were opened wide,  
 And at a certain page I traced  
 Every record undefaced,  
 Added by successive years,—  
 The harvestings of truth's stray ears  
 Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf  
 Bound together for belief.  
 Yes, I said—that He will go  
 And sit with these in turn, I know.  
 Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims  
 Too giddily to guide her limbs,  
 Disabled by their palsy-stroke  
 From propping me. Though Rome's gross yoke  
 Drops off, no more to be endured,  
 Her teaching is not so obscured

By errors and perversities,  
That no truth shines athwart the lies :  
And He, whose eye detects a spark  
Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,  
May well see flame where each beholder  
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.  
But I, a mere man, fear to quit  
The clue God gave me as most fit  
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,  
Because Himself discerns all ways  
Open to reach Him : I, a man  
He gave to mark where faith began  
To swerve aside, till from its summit  
Judgment drops her damning plummet,  
Pronouncing such a fatal space  
Departed from the Founder's base :  
He will not bid me enter too,  
But rather sit, as now I do,  
Awaiting His return outside.  
—'Twas thus my reason straight replied,  
And joyously I turned, and pressed  
The Garment's skirt upon my breast,  
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,  
My heart cried,—what has been abusing me  
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,  
Instead of rising, entering boldly,  
Baring truth's face, and letting drift  
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift ?  
Do these men praise Him ? I will raise  
My voice up to their point of praise !  
I see the error ; but above  
The scope of error, see the love.—  
Oh, love of those first Christian days !  
—Fanned so soon into a blaze,  
From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,  
That the antique sovereign Intellect  
Which then sate ruling in the world,  
Like a change in dreams, was hurled  
From the throne he reigned upon :  
—You looked up, and he was gone !  
Gone, his glory of the pen !  
—Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,  
Bade her scribes abhor the trick  
Of poetry and rhetoric,  
And exult, with hearts set free,  
In blessed imbecility  
Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet,  
Leaving Livy incomplete.

Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter !  
 —Love, while able to acquaint her  
 With the thousand statues yet  
 Fresh from chisel ,pictures wet  
 From brush, she saw on every side,  
 Chose rather with an infant's pride  
 To frame those portents which impart  
 Such unction to true Christian Art.  
 Gone, Music too ! The air was stirred  
 By happy wings : Terpander's bird  
 (That, when the cold came, fled away)  
 Would tarry not the wintry day,—  
 As more-enduring sculpture must,  
 Till a filthy saint rebuked the gust  
 With which he chanced to get a sight  
 Of some dear naked Aphrodite  
 He glanced a thought above the toes of,  
 By breaking zealously her nose off.  
 Love, surely, from that music's lingering,  
 Might have filched her organ-fingering,  
 Nor chose rather to set prayings  
 To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.  
 Love was the startling thing, the new ;  
 Love was the all-sufficient too ;  
 And seeing that, you see the rest.  
 As a babe can find its mother's breast  
 As well in darkness as in light,  
 Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.  
 True, the world's eyes are open now :  
 —Less need for me to disallow  
 Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,  
 Peevish as ever to be suckled,  
 Lulled by the same old baby-prattle  
 With intermixture of the rattle,  
 When she would have them creep, stand steady  
 Upon their feet, or walk already,  
 Not to speak of trying to climb.  
 I will be wise another time,  
 And not desire a wall between us,  
 When next I see a church-roof cover  
 So many species of one genus,  
 All with foreheads bearing *Lover*  
 Written above the earnest eyes of them ;  
 All with breasts that beat for beauty,  
 Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,  
 In noble daring, steadfast duty,  
 The heroic in passion, or in action,—  
 Or, lowered for the senses' satisfaction,

To the mere outside of human creatures,  
 Mere perfect form and faultless features.  
 What ! with all Rome here, whence to levy  
 Such contributions to their appetite,  
 With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,  
 They take, as it were, a padlock, and clap it tight  
 On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding  
 On the glories of their ancient reading,  
 On the beauties of their modern singing,  
 On the wonders of the builder's bringing,  
 On the majesties of Art around them,—  
 And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,  
 When faith has at last united and bound them,  
 They offer up to God for a present !  
 Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,—  
 And, only taking the act in reference  
 To the other recipients who might have allowed of it,  
 I will rejoice that God had the preference !

## XII.

So I summed up my new resolves :  
 Too much love there can never be.  
 And where the intellect devolves  
 Its function on love exclusively,  
 I, as one who possesses both,  
 Will accept the provision, nothing loth,  
 —Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,  
 That my intellect may find its share.  
 And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,  
 And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,  
 Who, examining the capabilities  
 Of the block of marble he has to fashion  
 Into a type of thought or passion,—  
 Not always, using obvious facilities,  
 Shapes it, as any artist can,  
 Into a perfect symmetrical man,  
 Complete from head to foot of the life-size,  
 Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,—  
 But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate  
 A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,  
 And uses the whole of his block for the bust,  
 Leaving the minds of the public to finish it,  
 Since cut it ruefully short he must :  
 On the face alone he expends his devotion ;  
 He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,  
 —Saying, “ Applaud me for this grand notion  
 “ Of what a face may be ! As for completing it

“ In breast and body and limbs, do *that*, you!”  
 All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it,  
 A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,  
 Could man carve so as to answer volition.  
 And how much nobler than petty cavils,  
 A hope to find, in my spirit-travels,  
 Some artist of another ambition,  
 Who having a block to carve, no bigger,  
 Has spent his power on the opposite quest,  
 And believed to begin at the feet was best—  
 For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!

## XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night!  
 And still as we swept through storm and night,  
 My heart beat lighter and more light:  
 And lo, as before, I was walking swift,  
 With my senses settling fast and steadying,  
 But my body caught up in the whirl and drift  
 Of the Vesture's amplitude, still eddying  
 On just before me, still to be followed,  
 As it carried me after with its motion,  
 —What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed  
 And a man went weltering through the ocean,  
 Sucked along in the flying wake  
 Of the luminous water-snake.

## XIV.

Alone! I am left alone once more—  
 (Save for the Garment's extreme fold  
 Abandoned still to bless my hold)  
 Alone, beside the entrance-door  
 Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,  
 —Like nothing I ever saw before  
 At home in England, to my knowledge.  
 The tall, old, quaint, irregular town!  
 It may be . . . though *which*, I can't affirm . . . any  
 Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;  
 And this flight of stairs where I sit down,  
 Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, or Frankfort,  
 Or Göttingen, that I have to thank for't?  
 It may be Göttingen,—most likely.  
 Through the open door I catch obliquely  
 Glimpses of a lecture-hall;  
 And not a bad assembly neither—  
 Ranged decent and symmetrical  
 On benches, waiting what's to see there;

Which, holding still by the Vesture's hem,  
 I also resolve to see with them,  
 Cautious this time how I suffer to slip  
 The chance of joining in fellowship  
 With any that call themselves His friends,  
 As these folks do, I have a notion.  
 But hist—a buzzing and emotion !  
 All settle themselves, the while ascends  
 By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,  
 Step by step, deliberate  
 Because of his cranium's over-freight,  
 Three parts sublime to one grotesque,  
 If I have proved an accurate guesser,  
 The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.  
 I felt at once as if there ran  
 A shoot of love from my heart to the man—  
 That sallow, virgin-minded, studious  
 Martyr to mild enthusiasm,  
 As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious  
 That woke my sympathetic spasm,  
 (Beside some spitting that made me sorry)  
 And stood, surveying his auditory  
 With a wam pure look, well nigh celestial,—  
 —Those blue eyes had survived so much !  
 While, under the foot they could not smutch,  
 Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.  
 Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,  
 Till the auditory's clearing of throats  
 Was done with, died into a silence ;  
 And, when each glance was upward sent,  
 Each bearded mouth composed intent,  
 And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence,—  
 He pushed back higher his spectacles,  
 Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,  
 And giving his head of hair—a hake  
 Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity—  
 One rapid and impatient shake,  
 (As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie  
 When about to impart, on mature digestion,  
 Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)  
 —The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse—  
 Broke into his Christmas-Eve's discourse.

## XV.

And he began it by observin'  
 How reason dictated that men



Should rectify the natural swerving,  
 By a reversion, now and then,  
 To the well-heads of knowledge, few  
 And far away, whence rolling grew  
 The life-stream wide whereat we drink,  
 Commingled, as we needs must think,  
 With waters alien to the source :  
 To do which, aimed this Eve's discourse.  
 Since, where could be a fitter time  
 For tracing backward to its prime,  
 This Christianity, this lake,  
 This reservoir, whereat we slake,  
 From one or other bank, our thirst ?  
 So he proposed inquiring first  
 Into the various sources whence  
 This Myth of Christ is derivable ;  
 Demanding from the evidence,  
 (Since plainly no such life was liveable)  
 How these phenomena should class ?  
 Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,  
 Or never was at all, or whether  
 He was and was not, both together—  
 It matters little for the name,  
 So the Idea be left the same :  
 Only, for practical purpose' sake,  
 'Twas obviously as well to take  
 The popular story,—understanding  
 How the ineptitude of the time,  
 And the penman's prejudice, expanding  
 Fact into fable fit for the clime,  
 Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it  
 Into this myth, this Individuum,—  
 Which, when reason had strained and abated it  
 Of foreign matter, gave, for residuum,  
 A Man !—a right true man, however,  
 Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour !  
 Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient  
 To his disciples, for rather believing.  
 He was just omnipotent and omniscient,  
 As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving  
 His word, their tradition,—which, though it mean  
 Something entirely different  
 From all that those who only heard it,  
 In their simplicity thought and averred it,  
 Had yet a meaning quite as respectable :  
 For, among other doctrines delectable,  
 Was he not surely the first to insist on,  
 The natural sovereignty of our race ?—

Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place ;  
 And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,  
 Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,  
 I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,  
 The Vesture still within my hand.

## XVI.

I could interpret its command.  
 This time He would not bid me enter  
 The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.  
 Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic  
 When Papist struggles with Dissenter,  
 Impregnating its pristine clarity,  
 —One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,  
 Its gust of broken meat and garlic ;  
 —One, by his soul's too-much presuming,  
 To turn the frankincense's fuming  
 And vapours of the candle starlike  
 Into the cloud her wings she buoys on :  
 And each, that sets the pure air seething,  
 Poisoning it for healthy breathing—  
 But the Critic leaves no air to poison ;  
 Pumps out by a ruthless ingenuity  
 Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.  
 Thus much of Christ, does he reject ?  
 And what retain ? His intellect ?  
 What is it I must reverence duly ?  
 Poor intellect for worship, truly,  
 Which tells me simply what was told  
 (If mere morality, bereft  
 Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)  
 Elsewhere by voices manifold ;  
 With this advantage, that the stater  
 Made nowise the important stumble  
 Of adding, he, the sage and humble,  
 Was also one with the Creator.  
 You urge Christ's followers' simplicity :  
 But how does shifting blame evade it ?  
 Have wisdom's words no more felicity ?  
 The stumbling-block, His speech—who laid it ?  
 How comes it that for one found able,  
 To sift the truth of it from fable,  
 Millions believe it to the letter ?  
 Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better ?  
 Strange goodness, which upon the score  
 Of being goodness, the mere due

Of man to fellow-man, much more  
To God,—should take another view  
Of its possessor's privilege,  
And bid him rule his race! You pledge  
Your fealty to such rule? What, all—  
From Heavenly John and Attic Paul,  
And that brave weather-battered Peter  
Whose stout faith only stood completer  
For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,  
As the more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—  
All, down to you, the man of men,  
Professing here at Göttingen,  
Compose Christ's flock! So you and I  
Are sheep of a good man! and why?  
The goodness,—how did he acquire it?  
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it?  
Choose which; then tell me, on what ground  
Should its possessor dare propound  
His claim to rise o'er us an inch?  
Were goodness all some man's invention,  
Who arbitrarily made mention  
What we should follow, and where flinch.—  
What qualities might take the style  
Of right and wrong,—and had such guessing  
Met with as general acquiescing  
As graced the Alphabet erewhile,  
When A got leave an Ox to be,  
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,—  
For thus inventing thing and title  
Worship were that man's fit requital.  
But if the common conscience must  
Be ultimately judge, adjust  
Its apt name to each quality  
Already known,—I would decree  
Worship for such mere demonstration  
And simple work of nomenclature,  
Only the day I praised, not Nature,  
But Harvey, for the circulation.  
I would praise such a Christ, with pride  
And joy, that he, as none beside,  
Had taught us how to keep the mind  
God gave him, as God gave his kind,  
Freer than they from fleshly taint!  
I would call such a Christ our Saint,  
As I declare our Poet, him  
Whose insight makes all others dim:  
A thousand poets pried at life,  
And only one amid the strife

Rose to be Shakespeare! Each shall take  
 His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake—  
 Though some objected—"Had we seen  
 "The heart and head of each, what screen  
 "Was broken there to give them light,  
 "While in ourselves it shuts the sight,  
 "We should no more admire, perchance,  
 "That these found truth out at a glance,  
 "Than marvel how the bat discerns  
 "Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,  
 "Led by a finer tact, a gift  
 "He boasts, which other birds must shift  
 "Without, and grope as best they can."  
 No, freely I would praise the man,—  
 Nor one whit more, if he contended  
 That gift of his, from God, descended.  
 Ah, friend, what gift of man's does not?  
 No nearer Something, by a jot,  
 Rise an infinity of Nothings  
 Than one: take Euclid for your teacher:  
 Distinguish kinds: do crownings, clothings,  
 Make that Creator which was creature?  
 Multiply gifts upon his head,  
 And what, when all's done, shall be said  
 But . . . the more gifted he, I ween!  
 That one's made Christ, another, Pilate,  
 And This might be all That has been,—  
 So what is there to frown or smile at?  
 What is left for us, save, in growth  
 Of soul, to rise up, far past both,  
 From the gift looking to the Giver,  
 And from the cistern to the River,  
 And from the finite to Infinity,  
 And from man's dust to God's divinity?

## XVII.

Take all in a word: the Truth in God's breast  
 Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:  
 Though He is so bright and we so dim,  
 We are made in His image to witness Him:  
 And were no eye in us to tell,  
 Instructed by no inner sense,  
 The light of Heaven from the dark of Hell,  
 That light would want its evidence,—  
 Though Justice, Good and Truth were still  
 Divine, if, by some demon's will,

Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed  
 Law through the worlds, and Right misnamed.  
 No mere exposition of morality  
 Made or in part or in totality,  
 Should win you to give it worship, therefore :  
 And, if no better proof you will care for,  
 —Whom do you count the worst man upon earth ?  
 Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more  
 Of what Right is, than arrives at birth  
 In the best man's acts that we bow before :  
 This last *knows* better—true ; but my fact is,  
 'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise ;  
 And thence I conclude that the real God-function  
 Is to furnish a motive and injunction  
 For practising what we know already.  
 And such an injunction and such a motive  
 As the God in Christ, do you waive, and “ heady  
 High-minded,” hang your tablet-votive  
 Outside the fane on a finger-post ?  
 Morality to the uttermost,  
 Supreme in Christ as we all confess,  
 Why need *we* prove would avail no jot  
 To make Him God, if God He were not ?  
 What is the point where Himself lays stress ?  
 Does the precept run “ Believe in Good,  
 “ In Justice, Truth, now understood  
 “ For the first time ? ”—or, “ Believe in ME,  
 “ Who lived and died, yet essentially  
 “ Am Lord of Life ? ” Whoever can take  
 The same to his heart and for mere love's sake  
 Conceive of the love,—that man obtains  
 A new truth ; no conviction gains  
 Of an old one only, made intense  
 By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

## XVIII.

Can it be that He stays inside ?  
 Is the Vesture left me to commune with ?  
 Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with  
 Even at this lecture, if she tried ?  
 Oh, let me at lowest sympathise  
 With the lurking drop of blood that lies  
 In the desiccated brain's white roots  
 Without a throb for Christ's attributes,  
 As the Lecturer makes his special boast !  
 If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.

Admire we, how from heart to brain  
 (Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)  
 One instinct rises and falls again,  
 Restoring the equilibrium.  
 And how when the Critic had done his best,  
 And the Pearl of Price, at reason's test,  
 Lay dust and ashes levigable  
 On the Professor's lecture-table ;  
 When we looked for the inference and monition  
 That our faith, reduced to such a condition,  
 Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole,—  
 He bids us, when we least expect it,  
 Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole,  
 Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,  
 Which fact pays the damage done rewardingly,  
 So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly !  
 " Go home and venerate the Myth  
 " I thus have experimented with—  
 " This Man, continue to adore him  
 " Rather than all who went before him,  
 " And all who ever followed after ! "—  
 Surely for this I may praise you, my brother !  
 Will you take the praise in tears or laughter ?  
 That's one point gained : can I compass another ?  
 Unlearned love was safe from spurning—  
 Can't we respect your loveless learning ?  
 Let us at least give Learning honor !  
 What laurels had we showered upon her,  
 Girding her loins up to perturb  
 Our theory of the Middle Verb ;  
 Or Turklike brandishing a scimitar  
 O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter ;  
 Or curing the halt and maimed Iketides,  
 While we lounged on at our indebted ease :  
 Instead of which, a tricky demon  
 Sets her at Titus or Philemon !  
 When Ignorance wags his ears of leather  
 And hates God's word, 'tis altogether ;  
 Nor leaves he his congenial thistles  
 To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.  
 —And you, the audience, who might ravage  
 The world wide, enviably savage  
 Nor heed the cry of the retriever,  
 More than Herr Heine (before his fever),—  
 I do not tell a lie so arrant  
 As say my passion's wings are furled up,  
 And, without the plainest Heavenly warrant,  
 I were ready and glad to give this world up—

But still, when you rub the brow meticulous,  
 And ponder the profit of turning holy  
 If not for God's, for your own sake solely,  
 —God for bid I should find you ridiculous !  
 Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,  
 Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,  
 " Christians,"—abhor the Deist's pravity,—  
 Go on, you shall no more move my gravity,  
 Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse  
 I find it in my heart to embarrass them  
 By hinting that their stick's a mock horse,  
 And they really carry what they say carries them.

## XIX.

So sate I talking with my mind.  
 I did not long to leave the door  
 And find a new church, as before,  
 But rather was quiet and inclined  
 To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting  
 From further tracking and trying and testing.  
 This tolerance is a genial mood !  
 (Said I, and a little pause ensued).  
 One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,  
 And sees, each side, the good effects of it,  
 A value for religion's self,  
 A carelessness about the sects of it.  
 Let me enjoy my own conviction,  
 Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness !  
 Still spying there some dereliction  
 Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness !  
 Better a mild indifferentism,  
 To teach that all our faiths (though duller  
 His shines through a dull spirit's prism)  
 Originally had one colour—  
 Sending me on a pilgrimage  
 Through ancient and through modern times  
 To many peoples, various climes,  
 Where I may see Saint, Savage, Sage  
 Fuse their respective creeds in one  
 Before the general Father's throne !

## XX.

. . . 'Twas the horrible storm began afresh !  
 The black night caught me in his mesh,  
 Whirled me up, and flung me prone.  
 I was left on the college-step alone.

I looked, and far there, ever fleeting  
Far, far away, the receding gesture,  
And looming of the lessening Vesture,  
Swept forward from my stupid hand,  
While I watched my foolish heart expand  
In the lazy glow of benevolence,  
O'er the various modes of man's belief.  
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.  
—Needs must there be one way, our chief  
Best way of worship : let me strive  
To find it, and when found, contrive  
My fellows also take their share.  
This constitutes my earthly care :  
God's is above it, and distinct !  
For I, a man, with men am linked,  
And not a brute with brutes ; no gain  
That I experience, must remain  
Unshared ; but should my best endeavour  
To share it, fail—subsisteth ever  
God's care above, and I exult  
That God, by God's own ways occult,  
May—doth, I will believe—bring back  
All wanderers to a single track !  
Meantime, I can but testify  
God's care for me—no more, can I—  
It is but for myself I *know*.  
The world rolls witnessing around me  
Only to leave me as it found me ;  
Men cry there but my ear is slow.  
Their races flourish or decay  
—What boots it, while yon lucid way  
Loaded with stars, divides the vault ?  
How soon my soul repairs its fault  
When, sharpening senses' hebetude,  
She turns on my own life ! So viewed,  
No mere mote's-breadth but seems immense  
With witnessings of providence :  
And woe to me if when I look  
Upon that record, the sole book  
Unsealed to me, I take no heed  
Of any warning that I read !  
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,  
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,  
Whereby the truth from heaven slid  
Into my soul ?—I cannot bid  
The world admit He stooped to heal  
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal  
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,



I only knew He named my name.  
 And what is the world to me, for sorrow  
 Or joy in its censures, when to-morrow  
 It drops the remark, with just-turned head  
 Then, on again—That man is dead ?  
 Yes,—but for me—my name called,—drawn  
 As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,  
 He has dipt into on a battle-dawn :  
 Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—  
 Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance,—  
 With a rapid finger circled round,  
 Fixed to the first poor inch of ground,  
 To fight from, where his foot was found ;  
 Whose ear but a minute since lay free  
 To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—  
 Summoned, a solitary man,  
 To end his life where his life began,  
 From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van !  
 Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held  
 By the hem of the Vesture . . .

## XXI.

And I caught  
 At the flying Robe, and unrepelled  
 Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught  
 With warmth and wonder and delight,  
 God's mercy being infinite.  
 And scarce had the words escaped my tongue,  
 When, at a passionate bound, I sprung  
 Out of the wandering world of rain,  
 Into the little chapel again.

## XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright  
 On my bench, as if I had never left it ?  
 —Never flung out on the common at night  
 Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,  
 Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,  
 Or the laboratory of the Professor !  
 For the Vision, *that* was true, I wist,  
 True as that heaven and earth exist.  
 There sate my friend, the yellow and tall,  
 With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place ;  
 Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall,  
 She had slid away a contemptuous space :

And the old fat woman, late so placable,  
 Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakeable,  
 Of her milk of kindness turning rancid:  
 In short a spectator might have fancied  
 That I had nodded betrayed by a slumber,  
 Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,  
 Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,  
 To wake up now at the tenth and lastly.  
 But again, could such a disgrace have happened?  
 Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;  
 And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?  
 Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?  
 Could I report as I do at the close,  
 First, the preacher speaks through his nose:  
 Second, his gesture is too emphatic:  
 Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,  
 The subject-matter itself lacks logic:  
 Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.  
 Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,  
 Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call  
 Of making square to a finite eye  
 The circle of infinity,  
 And find so all-but-just-succeeding!  
 Great news! the sermon proves no reading  
 Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,  
 Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy!  
 And now that I know the very worst of him,  
 What was it I thought to obtain at first of him?  
 Ha! Is God mocked, as He asks?  
 Shall I take on me to change His tasks,  
 And dare, despatched to a river-head  
 For a simple draught of the element,  
 Neglect the thing for which He sent,  
 And return with another thing instead?—  
 Saying . . . "Because the water found  
 "Welling up from underground,  
 "Is mingled with the taints of earth,  
 "While Thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,  
 "And couldest, at a word, convulse  
 "The world with the leap of its river-pulse,—  
 "Therefore I turned from the oozeings muddy,  
 "And bring thee a chalice I found, instead:  
 "See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!  
 "One would suppose that the marble bled.  
 "What matters the water? A hope I have nursed,  
 "That the waterless cup will quench my thirst."  
 —Better have knelt at the poorest stream  
 That trickles in pain from the straitest rift!

For the less or the more is all God's gift,  
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.  
And here, is there water or not, to drink ?  
I, then, in ignofance and weakness,  
Taking God's help, have attained to think  
My heart does best to receive in meekness  
This mode of worship, as most to His mind  
Where earthly aids being cast behind,  
His All in All appears serene,  
With the thinnest human veil between,  
Letting the mystic Lamps, the Seven,  
The many motions of His spirit,  
Pass, as they list, to earth from Heaven.  
For the preacher's merit or demerit,  
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer  
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,  
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer ;  
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure ?  
Heaven soon sets right all other matters !—  
Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,  
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,  
This soul at struggle with insanity,  
Who thence take comfort, can I doubt,  
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.  
May it be mine ! And let us hope  
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,  
Turn'd sick at last of the day's buffoonery,  
Of his posturings and his petticoatings,  
Beside the Bourbon bully's gloatings  
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !  
Nor may the Professor forego its peace  
At Göttingen, presently, when, in the dusk  
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,  
Prophesied of by that horrible husk ;  
And when, thicker and thicker, the darkness fills  
The world through his misty spectacles,  
And he gropes for something more substantial  
Than a fable, myth, or personification,  
May Christ do for him, what no mere man shall,  
And stand confessed as the God of salvation !  
Meantime, in the still recurring fear  
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,  
While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,  
Without my own made—I choose here !  
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me ;  
I have done !—And if any blames me,  
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity  
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—

Or, worse, that I trench, with undue levity,  
 On the bounds of the Holy and the awful,  
 I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,  
 And refer myself to THEE, instead of him ;  
 Who head and heart alike discernest,  
 Looking below light speech we utter,  
 When the frothy spume and frequent sputter  
 Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !  
 May the truth shine out, stand ever before us !  
 I put up pencil and join chorus  
 To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,  
 The last five verses of the third section  
 Of the seventeenth hymn in Whitfield's Collection  
 To conclude with the doxology.

---

## EASTER-DAY.

---

### I.

How very hard it is to be  
 A Christian ! Hard for you and me,  
 —Not the mere task of making real  
 That duty up to its ideal,  
 Effecting thus, complete and whole,  
 A purpose of the human soul—  
 For that is always hard to do ;  
 But hard, I mean, for me and you  
 To realise it, more or less,  
 With even the moderate success  
 Which commonly repays our strife  
 To carry out the aims of life.  
 " This aim is greater," you may say,  
 " And so more arduous every way."  
 —But the importance of the fruits  
 Still proves to man, in all pursuits,  
 Proportional encouragement.  
 " Then. what if it be God's intent

" That labour to this one result  
 " Shall seem unduly difficult ? "  
 —Ah, that's a question in the dark—  
 And the sole thing that I remark  
 Upon the difficulty, this :  
 We do not see it where it is,  
 At the beginning of the race ;  
 As we proceed, it shifts its place,  
 And where we looked for palms to fall,  
 We find the tug's to come,—that's all.

## II.

At first you say, " The whole, or chief  
 " Of difficulties, is Belief.  
 " Could I believe once thoroughly,  
 " The rest were simple. What? Am I  
 " An idiot, do you think? A beast?  
 " Prove to me only that the least  
 " Command of God is God's indeed,  
 " And what injunction shall I need  
 " To pay obedience? Death so nigh  
 " When time must end, eternity  
 " Begin,—and cannot I compute?  
 " Weigh loss and gain together? suit  
 " My actions to the balance drawn,  
 " And give my body to be sawn  
 " Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied  
 " To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,  
 " Like any martyr of the list?  
 " How gladly,—if I made acquist,  
 " Through the brief minutes' fierce annoy,  
 " Of God's eternity of joy."

## III.

—And certainly you name the point  
 Whereon all turns: for could you joint  
 This flexile finite life once tight  
 Into the fixed and infinite,  
 You, safe inside, would spurn what's out,  
 With carelessness enough, no doubt—  
 Would spurn mere life: but where time brings  
 To their next stage your reasonings,  
 Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink  
 Nor see the path so well, I think.

## IV.

You say, "Faith may be, one agrees,  
 "A touchstone for God's purposes,  
 "Even as ourselves conceive of them.  
 "Could he acquit us or condemn  
 "For holding what no hand can loose,  
 "Rejecting when we can't but choose?  
 "As well award the victor's wreath  
 "To whosoever should take breath  
 "Duly each minute while he lived—  
 "Grant Heaven, because a man contrived  
 "To see the sunlight every day  
 "He walked forth on the public way.  
 "You must mix some uncertainty  
 "With faith, if you would have faith *be*.  
 "Why, what but faith, do we abhor  
 "And idolize each other for—  
 "—Faith in our evil, or our good,  
 "Which is or is not understood  
 "Aright by those we love or those  
 "We hate, thence called our friends or foes?  
 "Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,  
 "When, turning from the ugly face,  
 "I found belief in it too hard;  
 "And both of us have our reward.  
 "—Yet here a doubt peeps: well for us  
 "Weak beings, to go using thus  
 "A touchstone for our little ends,  
 "And try with faith the foes and friends;  
 "—But God, bethink you! I would fain  
 "Conceive of the Creator's reign  
 "As based upon exacter laws  
 "Than creatures build by with applause.  
 "In all God's acts—(as Plato cries  
 "He doth)—He *should* geometrize.  
 "Whence, I desiderate . . ."

## V.

I see!

You would grow smoothly as a tree,  
 Soar heavenward, straightly up like fire—  
 God bless you—there's your world entire  
 Needing no faith, if you think fit;  
 Go there, walk up and down in it!  
 The whole creation travails, groans—  
 Contrive your music from its moans,

Without or let or hindrance, friend !  
 That's an old story, and its end  
 As old—you come back (be sincere)  
 With every question you put here  
 (Here where there once was, and is still,  
 We think, a living oracle,  
 Whose answers you stood carping at)  
 This time flung back unanswered flat,—  
 Besides, perhaps, as many more  
 As those that drove you out before,  
 Now added, where was little need !  
 Questions impossible, indeed,  
 To us who sate still, all and each  
 Persuaded that our earth had speech  
 Of God's, writ down, no matter if  
 In cursive type or hieroglyph,—  
 Which one fact frees us from the yoke  
 Of guessing why He never spoke.  
 You come back in no better plight  
 Than when you left us,—am I right ?

## VI.

So the old process, I conclude,  
 Goes on, the reasoning's pursued  
 Further. You own, "'Tis well averred,  
 " A scientific faith's absurd,  
 " —Frustrates the very end 'twas meant  
 " To serve : so I would rest content  
 " With a mere probability,  
 " But, probable ; the chance must lie  
 " Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,  
 " So long as there is just enough  
 " To pin my faith to, though it hap  
 " Only at points : from gap to gap  
 " One hangs up a huge curtain so,  
 " Grandly, nor seeks to have it go  
 " Foldless and flat along the wall :  
 " —What care I that some interval  
 " Of life less plainly might depend  
 " On God ? I'd hang there to the end ;  
 " And thus I should not find it hard  
 " To be a Christian and debarred  
 " From trailing on the earth, till furled  
 " Away by death !—Renounce the world ?  
 " Were that a mighty hardship ? Plan  
 " A pleasant life, and straight some man

" Beside you, with, if he thought fit.  
 " Abundant means to compass it,  
 " Shall turn deliberate aside  
 " To try and live as, if you tried  
 " You clearly might, yet most despise.  
 " One friend of mine wears out his eyes,  
 " Slighting the stupid joys of sense,  
 " In patient hope that, ten years hence,  
 " Somewhat completer, he may see  
 " His list of *lepidoptera* :  
 " While just the other who most laughs  
 " At him, above all epitaphs  
 " Aspires to have his tomb describe  
 " Himself as Sole among the tribe  
 " Of snuff-box-fanciers, who possessed  
 " A Grignon with the Regent's crest.  
 " So that, subduing as you want,  
 " Whatever stands predominant  
 " Among my earthly appetites  
 " For tastes, and smells, and sounds, and sights,  
 " I shall be doing that alone,  
 " To gain a palm-branch and a throne,  
 " Which fifty people undertake  
 " To do, and gladly, for the sake  
 " Of giving a Semitic guess,  
 " Or playing pawns at blindfold chess.

## VII.

Good ! and the next thing is,—look round  
 For evidence enough. 'Tis found,  
 No doubt : as is your sort of mind,  
 So is your sort of search—you'll find  
 What you desire, and that's to be  
 A Christian : what says History ?  
 How comforting a point it were  
 To find some mummy-scrap declare  
 There lived a Moses ! Better still,  
 Prove Jonah's whale translatable  
 Into some quicksand of the seas,  
 Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,  
 That Faith might clap her wings and crow  
 From such an eminence ! Or, no—  
 The Human Heart's best ; you prefer  
 Making that prove the minister  
 To truth ; you probe its wants and needs  
 And hopes and fears, then try what creeds



Meet these most aptly,—resolute  
 That Faith plucks such substantial fruit  
 Wherever these two correspond,  
 She little needs to look beyond,  
 To puzzle out what Orpheus was,  
 Or Dionysius Zagrias.  
 You'll find sufficient, as I say,  
 To satisfy you either way.  
 You wanted to believe; your pains  
 Are crowned—you do: and what remains?  
 Renounce the world!—Ah, were it done  
 By merely cutting one by one  
 Your limbs off, with your wise head last,  
 How easy were it!—how soon past,  
 If once in the believing mood!  
 Such is man's usual gratitude,  
 Such thanks to God do we return,  
 For not exacting that we spurn  
 A single gift of life, forego  
 One real gain,—only taste them so  
 With gravity and temperance,  
 That those mild virtues may enhance  
 Such pleasures, rather than abstract—  
 Last spice of which, will be the fact  
 Of love discerned in every gift;  
 While, when the scene of life shall shift,  
 And the gay heart be taught to ache,  
 As sorrows and privations take  
 The place of joy,—the thing that seems  
 Mere misery, under human schemes,  
 Becomes, regarded by the light  
 Of Love, as very near, or quite  
 As good a gift as joy before.  
 So plain is it that all the more  
 God's dispensations merciful,  
 More pettishly we try and cull  
 Briars, thistles, from our private plot,  
 To mar God's ground where thorns are not!

## VIII.

Do you say this, or I?—Oh, you!  
 Then, what, my friend,—(so I pursue  
 Our parley)—you indeed opine  
 That the Eternal and Divine  
 Did, eighteen centuries ago,  
 In very truth . . . Enough! you know

The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth,  
 That Life, that Death! And all, the earth  
 Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew black  
 Rather than see; all, Nature's fack  
 And throe at dissolution's brink  
 Attested,—it took place, you think,  
 Only to give our joys a zest,  
 And prove our sorrows for the best?  
 We differ, then! Were I, still pale  
 And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,  
 Waiting to hear God's voice declare  
 What horror followed for my share,  
 As implicated in the deed,  
 Apart from other sins,—concede  
 That if He blacked out in a blot  
 My brief life's pleasantness, 'twere not  
 So very disproportionate!  
 Or there might be another fate—  
 I certainly could understand  
 (If fancies were the thing in hand)  
 How God might save, at that Day's price,  
 The impure in their impurities,  
 Leave formal licence and complete  
 To choose the fair, and pick the sweet.  
 But there be certain words, broad, plain,  
 Uttered again and yet again,  
 Hard to mistake, to overgloss—  
 Announcing this world's gain for loss,  
 And bidding us reject the same:  
 The whole world lieth (they proclaim)  
 In wickedness,—come out of it!—  
 Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,  
 But I who thrill through every nerve  
 At thought of what deaf ears deserve,—  
 How do you counsel in the case?

## IX.

“ I'd take, by all means, in your place,  
 “ The safe side, since it so appears:  
 “ Deny myself, a few brief years,  
 “ The natural pleasure, leave the fruit  
 “ Or cut the plant up by the root.  
 “ Remember what a martyr said  
 “ On the rude tablet overhead—  
 “ ‘ I was born sickly, poor and mean,  
 “ ‘ A slave; no misery could screen  
 “ ‘ The holders of the pearl of price

" ' From Cæsar's envy ; therefore twice  
 " ' I fought with beasts, and three times saw  
 " ' My children suffer by his law—  
 " ' At last my own release was earned :  
 " ' I was some time in being burned,  
 " ' But at the close a Hand came through  
 " ' The fire above my head, and drew  
 " ' My soul to Christ, whom now I see.  
 " ' Sergius, a brother, writes for me  
 " ' This testimony on the wall—  
 " ' For me, I have forgot it all.'  
 " You say right ; this were not so hard !  
 " And since one nowise is debarred  
 " From this, why not escape some sins  
 " By such a method ? "

## X.

—Then begins

To the old point, revulsion new—  
 (For 'tis just this, I bring you to)  
 If after all we should mistake,  
 And so renounce life for the sake  
 Of death and nothing else ? You hear  
 Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer  
 Back to ourselves with good effect—  
 ' There *were* my beetles to collect !'  
 ' My box—a trifle, I confess,  
 ' But here I hold it, ne'ertheless !'  
 Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart  
 And answer) we, the better part  
 Have chosen, though 'twere only hope,—  
 Nor envy moles like you that grope  
 Amid your veritable muck,  
 More than the grasshoppers would truck,  
 For yours, their passionate life away,  
 That spends itself in leaps all day  
 To reach the sun, you want the eyes  
 To see, as they the wings to rise  
 And match the noble hearts of them !  
 So, the contemner we condemn,—  
 And, when doubt strikes us, so, we ward  
 Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,  
 —Not struck enough to overturn  
 Our faith, but shake it—make us learn  
 What I began with, and, I wis,  
 End, having proved,—how hard it is  
 To be a Christian !

## XI.

"Proved, or not,  
 "Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,  
 "You get of mine, for taking pains  
 "To make it hard to me. Who gains  
 "By that, I wonder? Here I live  
 "In trusting ease; and do you drive  
 "At causing me to lose what most  
 "Yourself would mourn for when 'twas lost?"

## XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus  
 You leave St. Paul for Æschylus?—  
 —Who made his Titan's arch-device  
 The giving men *blind hopes* to spice  
 The meal of life with, else devoured  
 In bitter haste, while lo! Death loured  
 Before them at the platter's edge!  
 If faith should be, as we allege,  
 Quite other than a condiment  
 To heighten flavors with, or meant  
 (Like that brave curry of his Grace)  
 To take at need the victuals' place?  
 If having dined you would digest  
 Besides, and turning to your rest  
 Should find instead . . .

## XIII.

Now, you shall see  
 And judge if a mere foppery  
 Pricks on my speaking! I resolve  
 To utter . . . yes, it shall devolve  
 On you to hear as solemn, strange  
 And dread a thing as in the range  
 Of facts,—or fancies, if God will—  
 E'er happened to our kind! I still  
 Stand in the cloud, and while it wraps  
 My face, ought not to speak, perhaps;  
 Seeing that as I carry through  
 My purpose, if my words in you  
 Find veritable listeners,  
 My story, reason's self avers  
 Must needs be false—the happy chance!  
 While, if each human countenance

I meet in London streets all day,  
 Be what I fear,—my warnings fray  
 No one, and no one they convert,  
 And no one helps me to assert  
 How hard it is to really be  
 A Christian, and in vacancy  
 I pour this story !

## XIV.

I commence  
 By trying to inform you, whence  
 It comes that every Easter-night  
 As now, I sit up, watch, till light  
 Shall break, those chimney-stacks and roofs  
 Give, through my window-pane, grey proofs  
 That Easter-day is breaking slow.  
 On such a night, three years ago,  
 It chanced that I had cause to cross  
 The common, where the chapel was,  
 Our friend spoke of, the other day—  
 You've not forgotten, I dare say.  
 I fell to musing of the time  
 So close, the blessed matin-prime  
 All hearts leap up at, in some guise—  
 One could not well do otherwise.  
 Insensibly my thoughts were bent  
 Toward the main point ; I overwent  
 Much the same ground of reasoning  
 As you and I just now : one thing  
 Remained, however—one that tasked  
 My soul to answer ; and I asked,  
 Fairly and frankly, what might be  
 That History, that Faith, to me—  
 —Me there—not me, in some domain  
 Built up and peopled by my brain,  
 Weighing its merits as one weighs  
 Mere theories for blame or praise,  
 —The Kingcraft of the Lucumons,  
 Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons,—  
 But as *my* faith, or none at all.  
 ' How were my case, now, should I fall  
 ' Dead here, this minute—do I lie  
 ' Faithful or faithless ? '—Note that I  
 Inclined thus ever !—little, prone,  
 For instance, when I slept alone  
 In childhood, to go calm to sleep  
 And leave a closet where might keep

His watch perdue some murderer  
 Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir,  
 As good, authentic legends tell  
 He might—' But how improbable !  
 ' How little likely to deserve  
 ' The pains and trial to the nerve  
 ' Of thrusting head into the dark,'—  
 Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark  
 Besides, that, should the dreadful scout  
 Really lie hid there, to leap out  
 At first turn of the rusty key,  
 It were small gain that she could see  
 In being killed upon the floor  
 And losing one night's sleep the more.  
 I tell you, I would always burst  
 The door ope, know my fate at first.—  
 This time, indeed, the closet penned  
 No such assassin : but a friend  
 Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit  
 For counsel, Common Sense, to-wit,  
 Who said a good deal that might pass,—  
 Heartening, impartial too, it was,  
 Judge else : ' For, soberly now,—who  
 ' Should be a Christian if not you ? '  
 (Hear how he smoothed me down.) ' One takes  
 ' A whole life, sees what course it makes  
 ' Mainly, and not by fits and starts—  
 ' In spite of stoppage which imparts  
 ' Fresh value to the general speed :  
 ' A life, with none, would fly indeed :  
 ' Your progressing is slower—right !  
 ' We deal with progressing, not flight.  
 ' Through baffling senses passionate,  
 ' Fancies as restless,—with a freight  
 ' Of knowledge cumbersome enough  
 ' To sink your ship when waves grow rough,  
 ' Not serve as ballast in the hold,  
 ' I find, 'mid dangers manifold,  
 ' The good bark answers to the helm  
 ' Where Faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm  
 ' Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide,  
 ' Whose hard head could not, if it tried,  
 ' Conceive a doubt, or understand  
 ' How senses hornier than his hand  
 ' Should 'tice the Christian off his guard—  
 ' More happy ! But shall we award  
 ' Less honor to the hull, which, dogged  
 By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,

'Masts by the board, and bulwarks gone,  
 'And stanchions going, yet bears on,—  
 'Than to mere life-boats, built to save,  
 'And triumph o'er the breaking wave?  
 'Make perfect your good ship as these,  
 'And what were her performances!'

I added—'Would the ship reached home!  
 'I wish indeed "God's kingdom come—"  
 'The day when I shall see appear  
 'His bidding, as my duty, clear  
 'From doubt! And it shall dawn, that day,  
 'Some future season; Easter may  
 'Prove, not impossibly, the time—  
 'Yes, that were striking—fates would chime  
 'So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring  
 'The Judgment!—deeper in the Spring  
 'Than now, however, when there's snow  
 'Capping the hills; for earth must show  
 'All signs of meaning to pursue  
 'Her tasks as she was wont to do—  
 '—The lark, as taken by surprise  
 'As we ourselves, shall recognise  
 'Sudden the end: for suddenly  
 'It comes—the dreadfulness must be  
 'In that—all warrants the belief—  
 '"At night it cometh like a thief."  
 'I fancy why the trumpet blows;  
 '—Plainly, to wake one. From repose  
 'We shall start up, at last awake  
 'From life, that insane dream we take  
 'For waking now, because it seems.  
 'And as, when now we wake from dreams,  
 'We say, while we recall them, "Fool,  
 '"To let the chance slip, linger cool  
 '"When such adventure offered! Just  
 '"A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust  
 '"Aside, a wicked mage to stab—  
 '"And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab,"—  
 'So shall we marvel why we grudged  
 'Our labours here, and idly judged  
 'Of Heaven, we might have gained, but lose!  
 'Lose? Talk of loss, and I refuse  
 'To plead at all! I speak no worse  
 'Nor better than my ancient nurse  
 'When she would tell me in my youth  
 'I well deserved that shapes uncouth  
 'Should fright and tease me in my sleep—  
 'Why did I not in memory keep

' Her precept for the evil's cure ?  
' " Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure  
' " You'll wake forthwith ! "'

## xv.

And as I said  
This nonsense, throwing back my head  
With light complacent laugh, I found  
Suddenly all the midnight round  
One fire. The dome of Heaven had stood  
As made up of a multitude  
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack  
Of ripples infinite and black,  
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,  
Like horror and astonishment,  
A fierce vindictive scribble of red  
Quick flame across, as if one said  
(The angry scribe of Judgment) ' There—  
' Burn it ! ' And straight I was aware  
That the whole ribwork round, minute  
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,  
Was tinted each with its own spot  
Of burning at the core, till clot  
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire  
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire  
As fanned to measure equable,—  
As when great conflagrations kill  
Night overhead, and rise and sink,  
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink  
And wither off the blasted face  
Of heaven, and I distinct could trace  
The sharp black ridgy outlines left  
Unburned like network—then, each cleft  
The fire had been sucked back into,  
Regorged, and out it surging flew  
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,  
Till, tolerating to be tamed  
No longer, certain rays world-wide  
Shot downwardly, on every side,  
Caught past escape ; the earth was lit ;  
As if a dragon's nostril split  
And all his famished ire o'erflowed ;  
Then, as he winced at his Lord's goad,  
Back he inhaled : whereat I found  
The clouds into vast pillars bound,  
Based on the corners of the earth,  
Propping the skies at top : a dearth



Of fire i' the violet intervals,  
 Leaving exposed the utmost walls  
 Of time, about to tumble in  
 And end the world.

## XVI.

I felt begin  
 The Judgment-Day : to retrocede  
 Was too late now.—‘ In very deed,  
 (I uttered to myself) ‘ that Day ! ’  
 The intuition burned away  
 All darkness from my spirit too—  
 There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,  
*Choosing the world.* The choice was made—  
 And naked and disguiseless stayed,  
 And unevadeable, the fact.  
 My brain held ne’ertheless compact  
 Its senses, nor my heart declined  
 Its office—rather, both combined  
 To help me in this juncture—I  
 Lost not a second,—agony  
 Gave boldness : there, my life had end  
 And my choice with it—best defend,  
 Applaud them ! I resolved to say,  
 ‘ So was I framed by Thee, this way  
 ‘ I put to use Thy senses here !  
 ‘ It was so beautiful, so near,  
 ‘ Thy world,—what could I do but choose  
 ‘ My part there ? Nor did I refuse  
 ‘ To look above the transient boon  
 ‘ In time—but it was hard so soon  
 ‘ As in a short life, to give up  
 ‘ Such beauty : I had put the cup  
 ‘ Undrained of half its fulness, by ;  
 ‘ But, to renounce it utterly,  
 ‘ —That was too hard ! Nor did the Cry  
 ‘ Which bade renounce it, touch my brain  
 ‘ Authentically deep and plain  
 ‘ Enough, to make my lips let go.  
 ‘ But Thou, who knowest all, dost know  
 ‘ Whether I was not, life’s brief while,  
 ‘ Endeavouring to reconcile  
 ‘ Those lips—too tardily, alas !  
 ‘ To letting the dear remnant pass,  
 ‘ One day,—some drops of earthly good  
 ‘ Untasted ! Is it for this mood,  
 ‘ That Thou, whose earth delights so well,  
 ‘ Hast made its complement a Hell ? ’

## XVII.

A final belch of fire like blood,  
 Overbroke all, next, in one flood  
 Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky  
 Was fire, and both, one extasy,  
 Then ashes. But I heard no noise  
 (Whatever was) because a Voice  
 Beside me spoke thus, "All is done,  
 "Time ends, Eternity's begun,  
 "And thou art judged for evermore!"

## XVIII.

I looked up; all was as before;  
 Of that cloud-Tophet overhead,  
 No trace was left: I saw instead  
 The common round me, and the sky  
 Above, stretched drear and emptily  
 Of life: 'twas the last watch of night,  
 Except what brings the morning quite,  
 When the armed angel, conscience-clear,  
 His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear  
 And gazes on the earth he guards,  
 Safe one night more through all its wards,  
 Till God relieve him at his post.  
 'A dream—a waking dream at most!  
 (I spoke out quick that I might shake  
 The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)  
 'The world's gone, yet the world is here?  
 'Are not all things as they appear?  
 'Is Judgment past for me alone?  
 '—And where had place the Great White Throne?  
 'The rising of the Quick and Dead?  
 'Where stood they, small and great? Who read  
 'The sentence from the Opened Book?'  
 So, by degrees, the blood forsook  
 My heart, and let it beat afresh;  
 I knew I should break through the mesh  
 Of horror, and breathe presently—  
 When, lo, again, the Voice by me!

## XIX.

I saw . . . Oh, brother, 'mid far sands  
 The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,—  
 Bright-white beneath, as Heaven, bright-blue,  
 Above it, while the years pursue

Their course. unable to abate  
 Its paradisa! laugh at fate :  
 One morn,—the Arab staggers blind  
 O'er a new tract of death, calcined  
 To ashes, silence, nothingness,—  
 Striving, with dizzy wits, to guess  
 Whence fell the blow : what if, 'twixt skies  
 And prostrate earth, he should surprise  
 The imaged Vapour, head to foot,  
 Surveying, motionless and mute,  
 Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt,  
 It vanish up again ?—So hapt  
 My chance. HE stood there. Like the smoke  
 Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke,—  
 I saw Him. One magnific pall  
 Mantled in massive fold and fall  
 His Dread, and coiled in snaky swathes  
 About His feet : night's black, that bathes  
 All else, broke, grizzled with despair,  
 Against the soul of blackness there.  
 A gesture told the mood within—  
 That wrapp'd right hand which bas'd the chin,—  
 That intense meditation fixed  
 On His procedure,—pity mixed  
 With the fulfilment of decree.  
 Motionless, thus, He spoke to me,  
 Who fell before His feet, a mass,  
 No man now.

## XX.

“ All is come to pass.  
 “ Such shows are over for each soul  
 “ They had respect to. In the roll  
 “ Of Judgment which convinced mankind  
 “ Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,  
 “ Terror must burn the truth into :  
 “ Their fate for them !—thou hadst to do  
 “ With absolute omnipotence,  
 “ Able its judgments to dispense  
 “ To the whole race, as every one  
 “ Were its sole object : that is done :  
 “ God is, thou art,—the rest is hurled  
 “ To nothingness for thee. This world,  
 “ This finite life, thou hast preferred,  
 “ In disbelief of God's own word,  
 “ To Heaven and to Infinity.  
 “ Here, the probation was for thee,

"To show thy soul the earthly mixed  
 "With Heavenly, it must choose betwixt.  
 "The earthly joys lay palpable,—  
 "A taint, in each, distinct as well;  
 "The Heavenly flitted, faint and rare,  
 "Above them, but as truly were  
 "Taintless, so in their nature, best.  
 "Thy choice was earth : thou didst attest  
 "'Twas fitter spirit should subserve  
 "The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve  
 "Beneath the spirit's play. Advance  
 "No claim to their inheritance  
 "Who chose the spirit's fugitive  
 "Brief gleams, and thought, 'This were to live  
 "'Indeed, if rays, completely pure  
 "'From flesh that dulls them, should endure,—  
 "'Not shoot in meteor-light athwart  
 "'Our earth, to show how cold and swart  
 "'It lies beneath their fire, but stand  
 "'As stars should, destined to expand,  
 "'Prove veritable worlds, our home !'  
 "Thou saidst,—'Let Spirit star the dome  
 "'Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,  
 "'No nook of earth,—I shall not seek  
 "'Its service further !' Thou art shut  
 "Out of the Heaven of Spirit ; glut  
 "Thy sense upon the world : 'tis thine  
 'For ever—take it !'

## XXI.

'How ? Is mine,  
 'The world ?' (I cried, while my soul broke  
 Out in a transport.) 'Hast thou spoke  
 'Plainly in that ? Earth's exquisite  
 'Treasures of wonder and delight,  
 'For me ?'

## XXII.

The austere Voice returned,—  
 "So soon made happy ? Hadst thou learned  
 "What God accounteth happiness,  
 "Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess  
 "What Hell may be His punishment  
 "For those who doubt if God invent  
 "Better than they. Let such men rest  
 "Content with what they judged the best.

" Let the Unjust usurp at will :  
 " The Filthy shall be filthy still :  
 " Miser, there waits the gold for thee !  
 " Hater, indulge thine enmity !  
 " And thou, whose heaven, self-ordained,  
 " Was to enjoy earth unrestrained,  
 " Do it ! Take all the ancient show !  
 " The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,  
 " And men apparently pursue  
 " Their works, as they were wont to do,  
 " While living in probation yet :  
 " I promise not thou shalt forget  
 " The past, now gone to its account,  
 " But leave thee with the old amount  
 " Of faculties, nor less nor more,  
 " Unvisited, as heretofore,  
 " By God's free spirit, that makes an end.  
 " So, once more, take thy world ; expend  
 " Eternity upon its shows,—  
 " Flung thee as freely as one rose  
 " Out of a summer's opulence,  
 " Over the Eden-barrier whence  
 " Thou art excluded. Knock in vain ! "

## XXIII.

I sate up. All was still again.  
 I breathed free : to my heart, back fled  
 The warmth. ' But, all the world ! ' ( I said ;  
 I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,  
 And recollected I might learn  
 From books, how many myriad sorts  
 Exist, if one may trust reports,  
 Each as distinct and beautiful  
 As this, the very first I cull.  
 Think, from the first leaf to the last !  
 Conceive, then, earth's resources ! Vast  
 Exhaustless beauty, endless change  
 Of wonder ; and this foot shall range  
 Alps, Andes,—and this eye devour  
 The bee-bird and the aloe-flower ?

## XXIV.

And the Voice, " Welcome so to rate  
 " The arras-folds that variegate  
 " The earth, God's antechamber, well !  
 " The wise, who waited there, could tell

" By these, what royalties in store  
 " Lay one step past the entrance-door.  
 " For whom, was reckoned, not too much,  
 " This life's munificence ? For such  
 " As thou,—a race, whereof not one  
 " Was able, in a million,  
 " To feel that any marvel lay  
 " In objects round his feet all day ;  
 " Nor one, in many millions more,  
 " Willing, if able, to explore  
 " The secreter, minuter charm !  
 " —Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm  
 " Of power to cope with God's intent,—  
 " Or scared if the South Firmament  
 " With North-fire did its wings reledge !  
 " All partial beauty was a pledge  
 " Of beauty in its plenitude :  
 " But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,  
 " Retain it—plenitude be theirs  
 " Who looked above ! "

## xxv.

Though sharp despairs  
 Shot through me, I held up, bore on.  
 ' What is it though my trust is gone  
 ' From natural things ? Henceforth my part  
 ' Be less with Nature than with Art !  
 ' For Art supplants, gives mainly worth  
 ' To Nature ; 'tis Man stamps the earth—  
 ' And I will seek his impress, seek  
 ' The statuary of the Greek,  
 ' Italy's painting—there my choice  
 ' Shall fix ! '

## xxvi.

" Obtain it," said the Voice.  
 " The one form with its single act,  
 " Which sculptors laboured to abstract,  
 " The one face, painters tried to draw,  
 " With its one look, from throngs they saw !  
 " And that perfection in their soul,  
 " These only hinted at ? The whole,  
 " They were but parts of ? What each laid  
 " His claim to glory on ?—afraid  
 " His fellow-men should give him rank  
 " By the poor tentatives he shrank

" Smitten at heart from, all the more,  
 " That gazers pressed in to adore!  
 " " Shall I be judged by only these ?'  
 " If such his soul's capacities,  
 " Even while he trod the earth,—think, now  
 " What pomp in Buonarotti's brow,  
 " With its new palace-brain where dwells  
 " Superb the soul, unvexed by cell-  
 " That crumbled with the transient clay!  
 " What visions will his right hand's sway  
 " Still turn to form, as still they burst  
 " Upon him? How will he quench thirst  
 " Titanically infantine,  
 " Laid at the breast of the Divine?  
 " Does it confound thee,—this first page  
 " Emblazoning man's heritage?—  
 " Can this alone absorb thy sight,  
 " As if they were not infinite,—  
 " Like the omnipotence which tasks  
 " Itself, to furnish all that asks  
 " The soul it means to satiate?  
 " What was the world, the starry state  
 " Of the broad skies,—what, all displays  
 " Of power and beauty intermixed,  
 " Which now thy soul is chained betwixt,—  
 " What, else, than needful furniture  
 " For life's first stage? God's work, be sure,  
 " No more spreads wasted, than falls scant:  
 " He filled, did not exceed, Man's want  
 " Of beauty in this life. And pass  
 " Life's line,—and what has earth to do,  
 " Its utmost beauty's appanage,  
 " With the requirements of next stage?  
 " Did God pronounce earth 'very good'?  
 " Needs must it be, while understood  
 " For man's preparatory state;  
 " Nothing to heighten nor abate:  
 " But transfer the completeness here,  
 " To serve a new state's use,—and drear  
 " Deficiency gapes every side!  
 " The good, tried once, were bad, retried.  
 " See the enwrapping rocky niche,  
 " Sufficient for the sleep, in which  
 " The lizard breathes for ages safe:  
 " Split the mould—and as this would chafe  
 " The creature's new world-widened sense,  
 " One minute after you dispense  
 " The thousand sounds and sights that broke

"In, on him, at the chisel's stroke,—  
 "So, in God's eyes, the earth's first stuff  
 "Was, neither more nor less, enough  
 "To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.  
 "You reckoned it immeasurable :  
 "So thinks the lizard of his vault !  
 "Could God be taken in default,  
 "Short of contrivances, by you,—  
 "Or reached, ere ready to pursue  
 "His progress through eternity ?  
 "That chambered rock, the lizard's world,  
 "Your easy mallet's blow has hurled  
 "To nothingness for ever ; so,  
 "Has God abolished at a blow  
 "This world, wherein his saints were pent,—  
 "Who, though, found grateful and content,  
 "With the provision there, as thou,  
 "Yet knew He would not disallow  
 "Their spirits' hunger, felt as well,—  
 "Unsated,—not unsatable,  
 "As Paradise gives proof. Deride  
 "Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside ! "

## XXVII.

I cried in anguish, ' Mind, the mind,  
 ' So miserably cast behind,  
 ' To gain what had been wisely lost !  
 ' Oh, let me strive to make the most  
 ' Of the poor stunted soul, I nipped  
 ' Of budding wings, else well equipt  
 ' For voyage from summer isle to isle !  
 ' And though she needs must reconcile  
 ' Ambition to the life on ground,  
 ' Still, I can profit by late found  
 ' But precious knowledge. Mind is best—  
 ' I will seize mind, forego the rest  
 ' And try how far my tethered strength  
 ' May crawl in this poor breadth and length.  
 ' —Let me, since I can fly no more,  
 ' At least spin dervish-like about  
 ' (Till giddy rapture almost doubt  
 ' I fly) through circling sciences,  
 ' Philosophies and histories !  
 ' Should the whirl slacken there, then Verse,  
 ' Fining to music, shall asperse  
 ' Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain  
 ' Intoxicate, half-break my chain !



' Not joyless, though more favoured feet  
Stand calm, where I want wings to beat  
The floor? At least earth's bond is broke!

## XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)  
' Let me alone! No answer, pray,  
' To this! I know what Thou wilt say!  
' All still is earth's,—to Know, as much  
' As Feel its truths, which if we touch  
' With sense or apprehend in soul,  
' What matter? I have reached the goal—  
' "Where to does Knowledge serve!" will burn  
' My eyes, too sure, at every turn!  
' I cannot look back now, nor stake  
' Bliss on the race, for running's sake.  
' The goal's a ruin like the rest! '—  
—"And so much worse thy latter quest,  
(Added the Voice) "that even on earth,  
"Whenever, in man's soul, had birth  
"Those intuitions, grasps of guess,  
"That pull the more into the less,  
"Making the finite comprehend  
"Infinity, the bard would spend  
"Such praise alone, upon his craft,  
"As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,  
"Goes to the craftsman who arranged  
"The seven strings, changed them and rechanged—  
"Knowing it was the South that harped.  
"He felt his song, in singing, warped,  
"Distinguished his and God's part: whence  
"A world of spirit as of sense  
"Was plain to him, yet not too plain,  
"Which he could traverse, not remain  
"A guest in:—else were permanent  
"Heaven upon earth, its gleams were meant  
"To sting with hunger for the light,—  
"Made visible in Verse, despite  
"The veiling weakness,—truth by means  
"Of fable, showing while it screens,—  
"Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,  
"Was ever fable on outside.  
"Such gleams made bright the earth an age:  
"Now, the whole sun's his heritage!  
"Take up thy world, it is allowed,  
"Thou who hast entered in the cloud!

## XXIX.

Then I—‘ Behold, my spirit bleeds,  
 ‘ Catches no more at broken reeds;—  
 ‘ But lilies flower those reeds above—  
 ‘ I let the world go, and take love !  
 ‘ Love survives in me, albeit those  
 ‘ I loved are henceforth masks and shows,  
 ‘ Not loving men and women : still  
 ‘ I mind how love repaired all ill,  
 ‘ Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends  
 ‘ With parents, brothers, children, friends !  
 ‘ Some semblance of a woman yet  
 ‘ With eyes to help me to forget,  
 ‘ Shall live with me ; and I will match  
 ‘ Departed love with love, attach  
 ‘ Its fragments to my whole, nor scorn  
 ‘ The poorest of the grains of corn  
 ‘ I save from shipwreck on this isle,  
 ‘ Trusting its barrenness may smile  
 ‘ With happy foodful green one day,  
 ‘ More precious for the pains. I pray,  
 ‘ For love, then, only ! ’

## XXX.

At the word,  
 The Form, I looked to have been stirred  
 With pity and approval, rose  
 O’er me, as when the headsman throws  
 Axe over shoulder to make end—  
 I fell prone, letting Him expend  
 His wrath, while, thus, the inflicting Voice  
 Smote me. “ Is this thy final choice ?  
 “ Love is the best ? ’Tis somewhat late !  
 “ And all thou dost enumerate  
 “ Of power and beauty in the world,  
 “ The mightiness of love was curled  
 “ Inextricably round about.  
 “ Love lay within it and without,  
 “ To clasp thee,—but in vain ! Thy soul  
 “ Still shrunk from Him who made the whole,  
 “ Still set deliberate aside  
 “ His love !—Now take love ! Well betide  
 “ Thy tardy conscience ! Haste to take  
 “ The show of love for the name’s sake,  
 “ Remembering every moment Who  
 “ Beside creating thee unto

' These ends, and these for thee, was said  
 " To undergo death in thy stead  
 " In flesh like thine : so ran the tale.  
 " What doubt in thee could countervail  
 " Belief in it ? Upon the ground  
 " " That in the story had been found  
 " " Too much love ? How could God love *so* ? '  
 " He who in all his works below  
 " Adapted to the needs of man,  
 " Made love the basis of the plan,—  
 " *Did* love, as was demonstrated :  
 " While man, who was so fit instead,  
 " To hate, as every day gave proof,—  
 " You thought man, for his kind's behoof,  
 " Both could and would invent that scheme  
 " Of perfect love—'twould well besecm  
 " Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,  
 " Not tally with God's usual ways ! "

## XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly—  
 ' Thou Love of God ! Or let me die,  
 ' Or grant what shall seem Heaven almost !  
 ' Let me not know that all is lost,  
 ' Though lost it be—leave me not tied  
 ' To this despair, this corpse-like bride !  
 ' Let that old life seem mine—no more—  
 ' With limitation as before,  
 ' With darkness, hunger, toil, distress :  
 ' Be all the earth a wilderness !  
 ' Only let me go on, go on,  
 ' Still hoping ever and anon  
 ' To reach one eve the Better Land ! '

## XXXII.

Then did the Form expand, expand—  
 I knew Him through the dread disguise,  
 As the whole God within his eyes  
 Embraced me.

## XXXIII.

When I lived again,  
 The day was breaking,—the grey plain  
 I rose from, silvered thick with dew.  
 Was this a vision ? False or true ?

Since then, three varied years are spent,  
 And commonly my mind is bent  
 To think it was a dream—be sure  
 A mere dream and distemperature—  
 The last day's watching: then the night,—  
 The shock of that strange Northern Light  
 Set my head swimming, bred in me  
 A dream. And so I live, you see,  
 Go through the world, try, prove, reject,  
 Prefer, still struggling to effect  
 My warfare; happy that I can  
 Be crossed and thwarted as a man,  
 Not left in God's contempt apart,  
 With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,  
 Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.  
 Thank God, she still each method tries  
 To catch me, who may yet escape,  
 She knows, the fiend in angel's shape!  
 Thank God no paradise stands barred  
 To entry, and I find it hard  
 To be a Christian, as I said!  
 Still every now and then my head  
 Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows drear  
 Spite of the sunshine, while I fear  
 And think, 'How dreadful to be grudged  
 'No ease henceforth, as one that's judged,  
 'Condemned to earth for ever, shut  
 'From Heaven' . . .

But Easter-Day breaks! But  
 Christ rises! Mercy every way  
 Is infinite,—and who can say?



SORDELLO.

1840.



# SORDELLO.



## BOOK THE FIRST.



Who will, may hear Sordello's story told :  
His story ? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end  
Like me ; for as the friendless people's friend  
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din  
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin  
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out  
Sordello, compassed murkily about  
With ravage of six long sad hundred years :  
Only believe me. Ye believe ?

Appears

Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,  
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst  
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell  
A story I could body forth so well  
By making speak, myself kept out of view,  
The very man as he was wont to do,  
And leaving you to say the rest for him :  
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim  
Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge,  
Letting of all men this one man emerge  
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,  
I should delight in watching first to last  
His progress as you watch it, not a whit  
More in the secret than yourselves who sit  
Fresh-chapleted to listen : but it seems  
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,  
Makers of quite new men, producing them  
Had best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem  
The wearer's quality, or take his stand  
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand



Beside them ; so for once I face ye, friends,  
 Summoned together from the world's four ends,  
 Dropped down from Heaven or cast up from Hell,  
 To hear the story I propose to tell.

Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,  
 Catching the dead if Fate denies the quick  
 And shaming her ; 'tis not for Fate to choose  
 Silence or song because she can refuse  
 Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache  
 Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake :  
 I have experienced something of her spite ;  
 But there's a realm wherein she has no right

- And I have many lovers : say but few  
 Friends Fate accords me ? Here they are ; now view  
 The host I muster ! Many a lighted face  
 Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace ;  
 What else should tempt them back to taste our air  
 Except to see how their successors fare ?  
 My audience : and they sit, each ghostly man  
 Striving to look as living as he can,  
 Brother by breathing brother ; thou art set,  
 Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret  
 A wondrous soul of them, nor move Death's spleen  
 Who loves not to unlock them. Friends ! I mean  
 The living in good earnest—ye elect  
 Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject  
 Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep  
 Some fit occasion forth, for fear ye sleep,  
 To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,  
 Verona ! stay—thou, spirit, come not near  
 Now—nor this time desert thy cloudy place  
 To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face !  
 I need not fear this audience, I make free  
 With them, but then this is no place for thee !  
 The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown  
 Up out of memories of Marathon,  
 Would echo like his own sword's griding screech  
 Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech  
 Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,  
 Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in  
 The knights to tilt—wert thou to hear ! What heart  
 Have I to play my puppets, bear my part  
 Before these worthies ?

Lo, the Past is hurled  
 In twain : upthrust, out-staggering on the world,  
 Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears  
 Its outline, kindles at the core, appears  
 Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more

Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore  
 The purple, and the Third Honorius filled  
 The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled :  
 At last remains of sunset dimly burn'd  
 O'er the far forests like a torch-flame turned  
 By the wind back upon its bearer's hand  
 In one long flare of crimson ; as a brand  
 The woods beneath lay black. A single eye  
 From all Verona cared for the soft sky :  
 But, gathering in its ancient market-place,  
 Talked group with restless group ; and not a face  
 But wrath made livid, for among them were  
 Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in care  
 To feast him. Fear had long since taken root  
 In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,  
 The ripe hate, like a wine : to note the way  
 It worked while each grew drunk ! men grave and grey  
 Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,  
 Letting the silent luxury trickle slow  
 About the hollows where a heart should be ;  
 But the young gulped with a delirious glee  
 Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood  
 At the fierce news : for, be it understood,  
 Envoys apprised Verona that her prince  
 Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since  
 A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust  
 Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust  
 With Ecelin Romano, from his seat  
 Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat  
 And stumbling on a peril unaware,  
 Was captive, "trammelled in his proper snare,"  
 They phrase it, "taken by his own intrigue :"  
 Immediate succour, from the Lombard League  
 Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,  
 For Azzo therefore and his fellow—hope  
 Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast !  
 Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast :  
 Prone is the purple pavice ; Este makes  
 Mirth for the Devil when he undertakes  
 To play the Ecelin ; as if it cost  
 Merely your pushing-by to gain a post  
 Like his ! The patron tells ye, once for all,  
 There be sound reasons that preferment fall  
 On our beloved . . .

Duke o' the Rood, why not ?  
 Shouted an Estian, grudge ye such a lot ?  
 The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,  
 Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown

That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts  
And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts.  
Taurello, quoth an envoy, as in wane  
Dwelt at Ferrara.\* Like an osprey fain  
To fly but forced the earth his couch to make  
Far inland till his friend the tempest wake,  
Waits he the Kaiser's coming ; and as yet  
That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps ; but let  
Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs  
The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs  
The sea it means to cross because of him :  
Sinketh the breeze ? His hope-sick eye grows dim ;  
Creep closer on the creature ! Every day  
Strengthens the Pontiff ; Ecelin, they say,  
Dozes at Oliero, with dry lips  
Telling upon his perished finger-tips  
How many ancestors are to depose  
Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze  
Deposits him in hell ; so Guelfs rebuilt  
Their houses ; not a drop of blood was spilt  
When Cino Bocchinpane chanced to meet  
Buccio Virtù ; God's wafer, and the street  
Is narrow ! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm  
With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm.  
This could not last. Off Salinguerra went  
To Padua, Podestà, with pure intent,  
Said he, my presence, judged the single bar  
To permanent tranquillity, may jar  
No longer—so ! his back is fairly turned ?  
The pair of goodly palaces are burned,  
The gardens ravaged, and your Guelf is drunk  
A week with joy ; the next, his laughter sunk  
In sobs of blood, for he found, some strange way,  
Old Salinguerra back again ; I say,  
Old Salinguerra in the town once more  
Uprooting, overturning, flame before  
Blood fetlock-high beneath him ; Azzo fled ;  
Who scaped the carnage followed ; then the dead  
Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,  
He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,  
Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce  
Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,  
On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth  
To see troop after troop encamp beneath  
I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch  
It took so many patient months to snatch  
Out of the marsh ; while just within their walls  
Men fed on men. Astute Taurello calls

A parley : let the Count wind up the war !  
 Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,  
 Agrees to enter for the kindest ends  
 Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,  
 No horse-boy more for fear your timid sort  
 Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.  
 Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog ;  
 Ten, twenty, thirty . . . curse the catalogue  
 Of burnt Guelf houses ! Strange Taurello shows  
 Not the least sign of life—whereat arose  
 A general growl : How ? With his victors by ?  
 I and my Veronese ? My troops and I ?  
 Receive us, was your word ? so jogged they on,  
 Nor laughed their host too openly : once gone  
 Into the trap . . .

Six hundred years ago !

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe  
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,  
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills  
 His sprawling path through letters anciently  
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)  
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,  
 Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque,  
 Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave  
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve  
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,  
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross ;  
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,  
 Was excommunicate that very year.  
 The triple-bearded Teuton come to life !  
 Groaned the Great League ; and, arming for the strife,  
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,  
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,  
 Its cry ; what cry ?

The Emperor to come !

His crowd of feudatories, all and some  
 That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,  
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,  
 Scattered anon, took station here and there,  
 And carried it, till now, with little care—  
 Cannot but cry for him ; how else rebut  
 Us longer ? Cliffs an earthquake suffered jut  
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest  
 Nothing save such another throe can wrest  
 From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown  
 Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown  
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,  
 Too sure to over-riot and confound

Ere long each brilliant islet with itself  
 Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,  
 Whirling the sea-drift wide : alas, the bruised  
 And sullen wreck ! Sunlight to be diffused  
 For that ! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,  
 The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst  
 Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,  
 And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,  
 So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood  
 O'er every cluster of the multitude  
 Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,  
 An emulous exchange of pulses, vents  
 Of nature into nature ; till some growth  
 Unfancied yet exuberantly clothe  
 A surface solid now, continuous, one :  
 The Pope, for us the People, who begun  
 The People, carries on the People thus,  
 To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us !  
 See you ?

Or say, Two Principles that live  
 Each fitly by its Representative :  
 Hill-cat . . . who called him so, our gracefulest  
 Adventurer ? the ambiguous stranger-guest  
 Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,  
 Those talons to their sheath ! ) whose velvet purr  
 Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon scout  
 . . . Arpo or Yoland, is it ? one without  
 A country or a name, presumes to couch  
 Beside their noblest ; until men avouch  
 That of all Houses in the Trevisan  
 Conrad desecres no fitter, rear or van,  
 Than Ecelo ! They laughed as they enrolled  
 That name at Milan on the page of gold  
 For Godego, Ramon, Marostica,  
 Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,  
 And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief !  
 No laughter when his son, the Lombard Chief  
 Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent  
 To Italy along the Vale of Trent,  
 Welcomed him at Roncaglia ! Sadness now---  
 The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,  
 The Asolan and Euganean hills,  
 The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills  
 Them all that Ecelin vouchsafes to stay  
 Among and care about them ; day by day  
 Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,  
 A castle building to defend a cot,  
 A cot built for a castle to defend.

Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end  
 To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge  
 By sunken gallery and soaring bridge—  
 He takes, in brief, a figure that besecms  
 The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,  
 A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged  
 From its old interests, and nowise changed  
 By its new neighbourhood; perchance the vaunt  
 Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant  
 Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in  
 A son as cruel; and this Ecelin  
 Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall,  
 And curling and compliant; but for all  
 Romano (so they style him) thrives, that neck  
 Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek  
 Proved 'tis some fiend, not him, men's flesh is meant  
 To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,  
 Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole  
 I' the world, a tree whose boughs are slipt the bole  
 Successively, why should not he shed blood  
 To further a design? Men understood  
 Living was pleasant to him as he wore  
 His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er  
 Propped on his truncheon in the public way.  
 Ecelin lifts two writhen hands to pray  
 At Oliero's convent now: so, place  
 For Azzo, Lion of the . . . why disgrace  
 A worthiness conspicuous near and far  
 (Atii at Rome while free and consular,  
 Esté at Padua to repulse the Hun)  
 By trumpeting the Church's princely son  
 Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,  
 Ancona's march, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,  
 Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk  
 Found it intolerable to be sunk  
 (Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)  
 Quite out of summer while alive and well:  
 Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,  
 Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,  
 Striving to coax from his decrepit brains  
 The reason Father Porphyry took pains  
 To blot those ten lines out which used to stand  
 First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore  
 Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;  
 And while within his palace these debate  
 Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,  
 Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare

Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care  
 For aught that's seen or heard until we shut  
 The smother in, the lights, all noises but  
 The carroch's booming; safe at last! Why strange  
 Such a recess should lurk behind a range  
 Of banquet-rooms? Your finger—thus—you push  
 A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush  
 Upon the banqueters, select your prey,  
 Waiting, the slaughter-weapons in the way  
 Strewing this very bench, with sharpened ear  
 A preconcerted signal to appear;  
 Or if you simply crouch with beating heart  
 Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part  
 To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;  
 Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow  
 The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?  
 What woman stood beside him? not the more  
 Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes  
 Because that arras fell between! Her wise  
 And lulling words are yet about the room,  
 Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom  
 Down even to her vesture's creeping stir:  
 And so reclines he, saturate with her,  
 Until an outcry from the square beneath  
 Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe  
 Above the cunning element, and shakes  
 The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks  
 On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,  
 The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit  
 Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away  
 Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,  
 In his wool wedding-robe; for he—for he—  
 "Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy"  
 (If I should falter now)—for he is Thine!  
 Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!  
 A herald-star I know thou didst absorb  
 Relentless into the consummate orb  
 That scared it from its right to roll along  
 A sempiternal path with dance and song  
 Fulfilling its allotted period  
 Serenest of the progeny of God  
 Who yet resigns it not; his darling stoops  
 With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops  
 Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent  
 Utterly with thee, its shy element  
 Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear:  
 Still, what if I approach the august sphere  
 Named now with only one name, disentwine

That under current soft and argentine  
 From its fierce mate in the majestic mass  
 Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass  
 In John's transcendent vision, launch once more  
 That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore  
 Where gluttoned Hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,  
 Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—  
 Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope  
 Into a darkness quieted by hope—  
 Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye  
 In gracious twilights where his Chosen lie,  
 I would do this! If I should falter now—

In Mantua-territory half is slough  
 Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet-oaks  
 Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio chokes  
 With sand the summer through; but 'tis morass  
 In winter up to Mantua walls. There was  
 (Some thirty years before this evening's coil)  
 One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,  
 Goito; just a castle built amid  
 A few low mountains; firs and larches hid  
 Their main defiles and rings of vineyard bound  
 The rest: some captured creature in a pound,  
 Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,  
 Secure beside in its own loveliness,  
 So peered with airy head, below, above,  
 The castle at its toils the lapwings love  
 To glean among at grape-time. Pass within:  
 A maze of corridors contrived for sin,  
 Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,  
 You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last  
 A maple-panelled room: that haze which  
 Floating about the panel, if there gleams  
 A sunbeam over it will turn to gold  
 And in light-graven characters unfold  
 The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade  
 Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,  
 Cut like a company of palms to prop  
 The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,  
 Leaning together; in the carver's mind  
 Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined  
 With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair  
 Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear  
 A vintage: graceful sister-palms: but quick  
 To the main wonder now. A vault, see; thick  
 Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits  
 Across the buttress suffer light by fits  
 Upon a marvel in the midst: nay, stoop—



A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group  
 Round it, each side of it, where'er one sees,  
 Upholds it—shrinking Caryatides  
 Of just-tinged marble like Eve's liliated flesh  
 Beneath her Maker's finger when the fresh  
 First pulse of life shot brightening the snow :  
 The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so  
 They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed,  
 Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,  
 Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil  
 Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,  
 Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length  
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength  
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily ;  
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,  
 Like priestesses because of sin impure  
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,  
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs ;  
 And every eve Sordello's visit begs  
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he came  
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same  
 As one of them, a certain space : and awe  
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw  
 Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress chinks,  
 Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden shrinks  
 And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain  
 Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain  
 Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipped  
 From off the rosary whereby the crypt  
 Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?  
 Then with a step more light, a heart more large,  
 He may depart, leave her and every one  
 To linger out the penance in mute stone.  
 Ah, but Sordello ? 'Tis the tale I mean  
 To tell you. In this castle may be seen,  
 On the hill tops, or underneath the vines,  
 Or southward by the mound of firs and pines  
 That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,  
 A slender boy in a loose page's dress,  
 Sordello : do but look on him awhile  
 Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest smile  
 The noisy flock of thievish birds at work  
 Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk  
 ('Tis winter with its sullenest of storms)  
 Beside that arras-length of brodered forms.  
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light  
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright  
 —Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,

And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed  
 —Auria, and their Child, with all his wives  
 From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,  
 Lady of the castle, Adelaide : his face  
 —Look, now he turns away ! Yourselves shall trace  
 (The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,  
 A sharp and restless lip, so well combine  
 With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive  
 Delight at every sense ; you can believe  
 Sordello foremost in the regal class  
 Nature has broadly severed from her mass  
 Of men and framed for pleasure as she frames  
 Some happy lands that have luxurious names  
 For loose fertility ; a footfall there  
 Suffices to upturn to the warm air  
 Half-germinating spices, mere decay  
 Produces richer life, and day by day  
 New pollen on the lily-petal grows,  
 And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.  
 You recognise at once the finer dress  
 Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness  
 At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled  
 (As though she would not trust them with her world)  
 A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,  
 And lets but half the sun look fervid through :  
 How can such love like souls on each full-fraught  
 Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught  
 Beyond its beauty ; till exceeding love  
 Becomes an aching weight, and, to remove  
 A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude  
 Their finding out themselves can work no good  
 To what they love nor make it very blest  
 By their endeavour, they are fain invest  
 The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,  
 Availing it to purpose, to control,  
 To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy  
 And separate interests that may employ  
 That beauty fitly, for its proper sake ;  
 Nor rest they here : fresh births of beauty wake  
 Fresh homage ; every grade of love is past,  
 With every mode of loveliness ; then cast  
 Inferior idols off their borrowed crown  
 Before a coming glory : up and down  
 Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine  
 To throb the secret forth ; a touch divine—  
 And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod :  
 Visibly through his garden walketh God.  
 So fare they—Now revert : one character

Denotes them through the progress and the stir ;  
 A need to blend with each external charm,  
 Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,  
 In something not themselves ; they would belong  
 To what they worship—stronger and more strong  
 Thus prodigally fed—that gathers shape  
 And feature, soon imprisons past escape  
 The votary framed to love and to submit  
 Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,  
 Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs  
 A legend ; Light had birth ere moons and suns,  
 Flowing through space a river and alone,  
 Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown  
 Hither and thither, foundering and blind,  
 When into each of them rushed Light—to find  
 Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.  
 Let such forego their just inheritance !  
 For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,  
 On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,  
 Proclaims each new revelation born a twin  
 With a distinctest consciousness within  
 Referring still the quality, now first  
 Revealed, to their own soul ; its instinct nursed  
 In silence, now remembered better, shown  
 More thoroughly, but not the less their own ;  
 A dream come true ; the special exercise  
 Of any special function that implies  
 The being fair or good or wise or strong,  
 Dormant within their nature all along—  
 Whose fault ? So homage other souls direct  
 Without, turns inward ; how should this deject  
 Thee, soul ? they murmur ; wherefore strength be quelled  
 Because, its trivial accidents withheld,  
 Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,  
 Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,  
 Like thine--existence cannot satiate,  
 Cannot surprise ; laugh thou at envious fate,  
 Who from earth's simplest combination stamp  
 With individuality--uncrampt  
 By living its faint elemental life,  
 Dost soar to heaven's completest essence, rife  
 With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,  
 Equal to being all.

In truth ? Thou hast  
 Life, then—wilt challenge life for us : thy race  
 Is vindicated so, obtains its place  
 In thy ascent, the first of us ; whom we  
 May follow, to the meanest, finally,

With our more bounded wills ?

Ah, but to find

A certain mood enervate such a mind,  
 Counsel it slumber in the solitude  
 Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good  
 Its nature just as life and time accord  
 (Too narrow an area to reward  
 Emprize—the world's occasion worthless since  
 Not absolutely fitted to evince  
 Its mastery), or if yet worse befall,  
 And a desire possess it to put all  
 That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere  
 Contain it ; to display completely here  
 The mastery another life should learn,  
 Thrusting in time eternity's concern,  
 So that Sordello. . . . Fool, who spied the mark  
 Of leprosy upon him, violet dark  
 Already as he loiters ? Born just now—  
 With the new century—beside the glow  
 And efflorescence out of barbarism ;  
 Witness a Greek or two from the abysm  
 That stray through Florence-town with studious air,  
 Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair . . .  
 If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet !  
 While at Siena is Guidone set,  
 Forehead on hand ; a painful birth must be  
 Matured ere San Eufemio's sacristy  
 Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze  
 At the noon-sun : look you ! An orange haze—  
 The same blue stripe round that—and, i' the midst,  
 Thy spectral whiteness, mother-maid, who didst  
 Pursue the dizzy painter !

Woe then worth

Any officious babble letting forth  
 The leprosy confirmed and ruinous  
 To spirit lodged in a contracted house !  
 Go back to the beginning rather ; blend  
 It gently with Sordello's life ; the end  
 Is piteous, you shall see, but much between  
 Pleasant enough ; meantime some pyx to screen  
 The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon  
 The goblin ! As they found at Babylon,  
 (Colleagues mad Lucius and sage Antonine)  
 Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine  
 Its pride,—in rummaging the rarities,  
 A cabinet ; be sure, who made the prize  
 Opened it greedily ; and out there curled  
 Just such another plague, for half the world

Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and crouch asquat,  
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot  
Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid  
Is fastened and the coffer safely hid  
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.  
Who will may hear Sordello's story told,  
And how he never could remember when  
He dwelt not at Goito; calmly then  
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's  
Glided his youth away: beyond the glades  
On the fir-forest's border, and the rim  
Of the low range of mountain, was for him  
No other world: but that appeared his own  
To wander through at pleasure and alone.  
The castle too seemed empty; far and wide  
Might he disport unless the northern side  
Lay under a mysterious interdict—  
Slight, just enough remembered to restrict  
His roaming to the corridors, the vault  
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,  
The maple-chamber, and the little nooks  
And nests and breezy parapet that looks  
Over the woods to Mantua; there he strolled.  
Some foreign women-servants, very old,  
Tended and crept about him—all his clue  
To the world's business and embroiled ado  
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.  
And first a simple sense of life engrossed  
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;  
The day's adventures for the day suffice—  
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange  
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange  
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease  
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,  
Eats the life out of every luscious plant,  
And when September finds them sere or scant  
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite  
And hies him after unforeseen delight;  
So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;  
As ever round each new discovery wreathed  
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine  
His admiration, bent on making fine  
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling  
In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king  
Confessed those minions! Eager to dispense  
So much from his own stock of thought and sense  
As might enable each to stand alone  
And serve him for a fellow; with his own

Joining the qualities that just before  
 Had graced some older favourite : so they wore  
 A fluctuating halo, yesterday  
 Set flicker and to-morrow filched away ;  
 Those upland objects each of separate name,  
 Each with an aspect never twice the same,  
 Waxing and waning as the new-born host  
 Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,  
 Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;  
 Only, preserving through the mad burlesque  
 A grave regard : conceive ; the orpine patch  
 Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch  
 The day those archers wound along the vines—  
 Related to the Chief that left their lines  
 To climb with clinking step the northern stair  
 Up to the solitary chambers where  
 Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;  
 He o'er-festooning every interval  
 As the adventurous spider, making light  
 Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,  
 From barbican to battlement ; so flung  
 Fantasies forth and in their centre swung  
 Our architect : the breezy morning fresh  
 Above, and merry ; all his waving mesh  
 Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.  
 This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged  
 To laying such a spangled fabric low  
 Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow :  
 But its abundant will was balked here : doubt  
 Rose tardily in one so fenced about  
 From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain :  
 Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,  
 Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force  
 Stead us, diverted from our natural course  
 Of joys, contrive some yet amid the dearth,  
 Vary and render them, it may be, worth  
 Most we forego : suppose Sordello hence  
 Selfish enough, without a moral sense  
 However feeble ; what informed the boy  
 Others desired a portion in his joy ?  
 Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and warp—  
 A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,  
 A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,  
 A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes  
 Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance  
 Lapping Sordello ? Not a circumstance  
 That makes for you, friend Naddo ! Eat fern-seed  
 And peer beside us and report indeed

If (your word) Genius dawned with throes and stings  
 And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs  
 Summers and winters quietly came and went,  
 Putting at length that period to content  
 By right the world should have imposed : bereft  
 Of its good offices, Sordello, left  
 To study his companions, managed rip  
 Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,  
 Core with its crust, their natures with his own ;  
 Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone :  
 As if the poppy felt with him ! Though he  
 Partook the poppy's red effrontery  
 Till Autumn spoils their fleeing quite with rain,  
 And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane  
 Protrudes : that's gone ! yet why renounce, for that,  
 His disenchanted tributaries—flat  
 Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn  
 Their simple presence may not well be borne  
 Whose parley was a transport once : recall  
 The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,  
 A poppy : why distrust the evidence  
 Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense ?  
 The new-born Judgment answered, little boots  
 Beholding other creatures' attributes  
 And having none : or say that it sufficed,  
 Yet, could one but possess, oneself, (enticed  
 Judgment) some special office ! Nought beside  
 Serves you ? Well then, be somehow justified  
 For this ignoble wish to circumscribe  
 And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe  
 Of actual pleasures : what now from without  
 Effects it ?—proves, despite a lurking doubt,  
 Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared ;  
 He tasted joys by proxy, clearly fared  
 The better for them ? thus much craved his soul.  
 Alas, from the beginning Love is whole  
 And true ; if sure of nought beside, most sure  
 Of its own truth at least ; nor may endure  
 A crowd to see its face, that cannot know  
 How hot the pulses throb its heart below ;  
 While its own helplessness and utter want  
 Of means to worthily be ministrant  
 To what it worships, do but fan the more  
 Its flame, exalt the idol far before  
 Itself as it would have it ever be ;  
 Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,  
 Coerced and put to shame, retaining Will,  
 Care little, take mysterious comforts still,

But look forth tremblingly to ascertain  
 If others judge their claims not urged in vain  
 —Will say for them their stifled thoughts aloud ;  
 So they must ever live before a crowd\*  
 Vanity, Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive

A crowd, now ? These brave women just alive,  
 That archer-troop ? Forth glided—not alone  
 Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,  
 —Nor Adelaide bent double o'er a scroll,  
 One maiden at her knees, that eve his soul  
 Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms  
 On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,  
 Started the meagre Tuscan up (her eyes,  
 The maiden's also, bluer with surprise)  
 —But the entire out-world : whatever scraps  
 And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,  
 Conceited the world's offices, and he  
 Transferred to the first-come, flower or tree,  
 Not counted a befitting heritage  
 Each, of its own right, singly to engage  
 Some Man, no other ; such availed to stand  
 Alone : strength, wisdom, grace on every hand  
 Soon disengaged themselves ; and he discerned  
 A sort of human life : at least, was turned  
 A stream of life-like figures through his brain—  
 Lord, Liegeman, Valvassor and Suzerain,  
 Ere he could choose, surrounded him ; a stuff  
 To work his pleasure on ; there, sure enough,  
 But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze ?  
 Are they to simply testify the ways  
 He who convoked them sends his soul along  
 With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song ?  
 While they live each his life, boast each his own  
 Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone  
 In some one point where something dearest loved  
 Is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved  
 Than aught he envies in the forest-wights !  
 No simple and self-evident delights,  
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,  
 Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,  
 Irsome perhaps, yet plainly recognised  
 By this, the sudden company—loves prized  
 By those who are to prize his own amount  
 Of loves. Once care because such make account,  
 Allow a foreign recognition stamp  
 The current value, and your crowd shall vamp  
 You counterfeits enough ; and so their print



Be on the piece, 'tis gold, attests the mint  
 And good, pronounce they whom my new appeal  
 Is made to : if their casual print conceal—  
 This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss  
 What I have lived without, nor felt my loss—  
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,  
 —What matter ? so must speech expand the dumb  
 Part sigh, part smile with which Sordello, late  
 No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,  
 Betakes himself to study hungrily  
 Just what the puppets his crude fantasy  
 Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights,  
 May please to promulgate for appetites ;  
 Accepting all their artificial joys  
 Not as he views them, but as he employs  
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock  
 Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock  
 Of authorised enjoyments he may spend  
 Himself, be Men, now, as he used to blend  
 With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else  
 'Twere mockery : for instance, how excels  
 My life that Chieftain's ? (who apprised the youth  
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month in truth,  
 Imperial Vicar ?) Turns he in his tent  
 Remissly ? Be it so—my head is bent  
 Deliciously amid my girls to sleep :  
 What if he stalks the Trentine-pass ? Yon steep  
 I climbed an hour ago with little toil—  
 We are alike there : but can I, too, foil  
 The Guelfs' paid stabber, carelessly afford  
 St. Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword  
 Baffling their project in a moment ? Here  
 No rescue ! Poppy he is none, but peer  
 To Ecelin, assuredly : his hand,  
 Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand  
 With Ecelin's success—try, now ! He soon  
 Was satisfied, returned—as to the moon  
 From earth ; left each abortive boy's-attempt  
 For feats, from failure happily exempt,  
 In fancy at his beck. One day I will  
 Accomplish it ! Are they not older still  
 —Not grown up men and women ? 'Tis beside  
 Only a dream ; and though I must abide  
 With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent  
 For all myself, acquire an instrument  
 For acting what these people act ; my soul  
 Hunting a body out, obtain its whole  
 Desire some day ! How else express chagrin

And resignation, show the hope steal in  
 With which he let sink from an aching wrist  
 The rough-hewn ash-bow, and a gold shaft hiss'd  
 Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down  
 Superbly! Crosses to the breach! . God's Town  
 Is gained Him back! Why bend rough ash-bows more?

So lives he: if not careless as before,  
 Comforted: for one may anticipate,  
 Rehearse the future; be prepared when fate  
 Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names  
 Startle, real places of enormous fames,  
 Estes abroad and Ecelins at home  
 To worship him, Mantuas, Veronas, Rome  
 To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?  
 Rather test qualities to heart's content—  
 Summon them, thrice selected, near and far—  
 Compress the starriest into one star,  
 So grasp the whole at once! The pageant's thinned  
 Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind  
 His spirit passed to winnow and divide;  
 Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side  
 The strong clave to the wise; with either classed  
 The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed  
 Mankind's beseechingnesses, and reduced  
 Themselves eventually, graces loosed,  
 And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape  
 Whose potency no creature should escape:  
 Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?  
 Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,  
 Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine  
 The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline—  
 Those swarthy hazel-clusters, scamed and chapped,  
 Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,  
 Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent  
 To keep in mind his sluggish armament  
 Of Canaan . . . Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce  
 Demeanour! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce  
 So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells  
 Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells  
 Upon the obdurate; that arm indeed  
 Has thunder for its slave; but where's the need  
 Of thunder if the stroke n multitude  
 Harkens, arrested in its angriest mood,  
 While songs go up exulting, then dispread,  
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
 Like an escape of angels? 'Tis the tune,  
 Nor much unlike the words the women croon  
 Smilingly, colourless and faint designed

Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind  
 Of her extreme youth's love-tales. Eglamor  
 Made that ! Half minstrel and half emperor,  
 Who but ill objects vexed him ? Such he slew.  
 The kinder sort were easy to subdue  
 By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones ;  
 And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones  
 Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,  
 Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,  
 Instead of saying, neither less nor more,  
 He had discovered, as our world before,  
 Apollo ? That shall be the name ; nor bid  
 Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid  
 The man—what thefts of every clime and day  
 Contributed to purfle the array  
 He climbed with (June's at deep) some close ravine  
 'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,  
 Over which singing soft the runnel slipt  
 Elate with rains : into whose streamlet dipt  
 He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock—  
 Though really on the stubs of living rock  
 Ages ago it crenneled ; vines for roof,  
 Lindens for walls ; before him, aye aloof,  
 Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,  
 Child of the simmering quiet, there to die :  
 Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied  
 Mighty descents of forest ; multiplied  
 Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees ;  
 There gendered the grave maple-stocks at ease ;  
 And, proud of its observer, strait the wood  
 Tried old surprises on him ; black it stood  
 A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed o'er)  
 So dead and dense the tiniest brute no more  
 Must pass ; yet presently (the cloud despatched)  
 Each clump, forsooth, was glistening detached  
 A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems !  
 Yet could not he denounce the stratagems  
 He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang  
 White summer-lightnings ; as it sank and sprang  
 In measure, that whole palpitating breast  
 Of Heaven, 'twas Apollo nature prest  
 At eve to worship.

Time stole : by degrees  
 The Pythons perished off ; his votaries  
 Sink to respectful distance ; songs redeem  
 Their pains, but briefer ; their dismissals seem  
 Emphatic ; only girls are very slow  
 To disappear—his Delians ! Some that glow

O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench  
 Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench;  
 Alike in one material circumstance—  
 All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance  
 The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,  
 A Daphne! We secure Count Richard's voice  
 In Este's counsels, one for Este's ends  
 As our Taurello, say his faded friends,  
 By granting him our Palma! The sole child,  
 They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled  
 Ecelin, years before this Adelaide  
 Wedded and turned him wicked; but the maid  
 Rejects his suit, those sleepy women boast.  
 She, scorning all beside, deserves the most  
 Sordello: so conspicuous in his world  
 Of dreams sate Palma. How the tresses curled  
 Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound  
 About her like a glory, even the ground  
 Was bright as with shed sunbeams; (breathe not, breathe  
 Not)—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,  
 Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,  
 Rests, but the other, listlessly below,  
 O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,  
 The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where  
 The languid blood lies heavily; and calm  
 On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,  
 As but suspended in the act to rise  
 By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes  
 Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets  
 Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.

Time fleets

That's worst! Because the pre-appointed age  
 Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage  
 She all but promised. Lean he grows and pale,  
 Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail  
 Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone  
 He tarries here! The earnest smile is gone.  
 How long this might continue matters not:  
 For ever, possibly; since to the spot  
 None come: our lingering Taurello quits  
 Mantua at last, and light our lady flits  
 Back to her place disburthened of a care.  
 Strange—to be constant here if he is there!  
 Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both  
 Goad Ecelin alike—Romano's growth  
 So daily manifest that Azzo's dumb  
 And Richard wavers . . . let but Friedrich come!  
 —Find matter for the minstrelsy's report

Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court  
To sing us a Messina morning up :  
Who, double rillets of a drinking cup,  
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,  
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south  
The other : what a method to apprise  
Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies !  
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour  
Records ; and his performance makes a tour  
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,  
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,  
Until the Formidable rouse is fanned  
Over the country—as Taurello aimed  
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,  
The novelty. Such games her absence stopped  
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse  
No longer, in the light of day pursues  
Her plans at Mantua—whence an accident  
That, breaking on Sordello's mixed content  
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,  
The veritable business of mankind.

---

## BOOK THE SECOND.

THE woods were long austere with snow : at last  
 Pink leaflets budded **on** the beech, and fast  
 Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,  
 Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods  
 Our buried year, a witch, grew young again  
 To placid incantations, and that stain  
 About were from her caldron, green smoke blent  
 With those black pines"—so Egglamor gave vent  
 To a chance fancy : whence a just rebuke  
 From his companion ; brother Naddo shook  
 The solemnest of brows : Beware, he said,  
 Of setting up conceits in Nature's stead !  
 Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so suré  
 As that to-day's adventure will secure  
 Palma, the forest-lady—only pass  
 O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,  
 Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks  
 Of withered fern with gold, into those walks  
 Of pines and take her ! Buoyantly he went.  
 Again his stooping forehead was besprent  
 With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide  
 Opened the great morass, shot every side  
 With flashing water through and through ; a-shine,  
 Thick steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine  
 Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced  
 Athwart the flying herons ? He advanced,  
 But warily ; though Mincio leaped no more,  
 Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor  
 A diamond jet : and if you stooped to pick  
 Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,  
 And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,  
 A sudden pond would silently encroach  
 This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge  
 Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge  
 Flushed, now, and panting ; crowds to see ; will own  
 She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,  
 To leave his suit ! One screen of pine-trees still  
 Opposes : but—the startling spectacle—

Mantua, this time ! Under the walls—a crowd  
 Indeed—real men and women—gay and loud  
 Round a pavilion. How he stood !

In truth  
 No prophecy had come to pass : his youth  
 In its prime now—and where was homage poured  
 Upon Sordello?—born to be adored,  
 And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made  
 To cope with any, cast into the shade  
 By this and this. Yet something seem to prick  
 And tingle in his blood ; a sleight—a trick—  
 And much would be explained. It went for naught—  
 The best of their endowments were ill bought  
 With his identity : nay, the conceit  
 This present roving leads to Palma's feet  
 Was not so vain . . . list ! The word, Palma ? Steal  
 Aside, and die, Sordello ; this is real,  
 And this—abjure !

What next ? The curtains, see,  
 Dividing ! She is there ; and presently  
 He will be there—the proper You, at length—  
 In your own cherished dress of grace and strength :  
 Most like the very Boniface . . .

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced ; but though  
 A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound  
 Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,  
 —This is not he, Sordello felt ; while “ Place  
 For the best Troubadour of Boniface,”  
 Hollaed the Jongleurs. “ Eglamor whose lay  
 Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day.”  
 Obsequious Naddo strung his master's lute  
 With the new lute-string, Elys, named to suit  
 The song. He stealthily at watch, the while,  
 Biting his lip to keep down a great smile  
 Of pride : then up he struck. Sordello's brain  
 Swam ; for he knew a sometime deed again ;  
 So could supply each foolish gap and chasm  
 The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,  
 Mistaking its true version—was the tale  
 Not of Apollo ? Only, what avail  
 Luring her down, that Elysian he pleased,  
 If the man dares no further ? Has he ceased ?  
 And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,  
 Sordello was beside him, had begun  
 (Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend  
 The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,  
 Taking the other's names and time and place

For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,  
 After the flying story ; word made leap  
 Out word ; rhyme—rhyme ; the lay could barely keep  
 Pace with the action visibly rushing past :  
 Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast  
 Than your Egyptian from the harassed bull  
 That wheels abrupt and, bellowing, fronts full  
 His plague, who spies a scarab 'neath his tongue,  
 And found 'twas Apis' flank his hasty prong  
 Insulted. But the people—but the cries,  
 The crowding round, and proffering the prize !  
 (For he had gained some prize)—He seemed to shrink  
 Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink  
 One sight withheld him ; there sat Adelaide,  
 Silent ; but at her knees the very maid  
 Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,  
 The same pure fleecy hair ; one curl of which,  
 Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er  
 She leant, speaking some six words and no more ;  
 He answered something, anything ; and she  
 Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily  
 Upon him, her neck's warmth and all ; again  
 Moved the arrested magic ; in his brain  
 Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,  
 And greater glare, until the intense flare  
 Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense,  
 And when he woke 'twas many a furlong thence,  
 At home : the sun shining his ruddy wont ;  
 The customary birds'-chirp ; but his front  
 Was crowned—was crowned ! Her scented scarf around  
 His neck ! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground ?  
 A prize ? He turned, and peeringly on him  
 Brooded the women faces, kind and dim,  
 Ready to talk. The Jongleurs in a troop  
 Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe  
 And Tagliafer ; how strange ! a childhood spent  
 Assuming, well for him, so brave a bent !  
 Since Eglamor, they heard, was dead with spite,  
 And Palma chose him for her minstrel.

Light

Sordello rose—to think, now ; hitherto  
 He had perceived. Sure a discovery grew  
 Out of it all ! Best live from first to last  
 The transport o'er again. A week he passed  
 Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,  
 From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance  
 Bounding his own achievement. Strange ! A man  
 Recounted that adventure, and began



Imperfectly ; his own task was to fill  
 The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,  
 Supply the necessary points, set loose  
 As many incidents of little use  
 —More imbecile the other, not to see  
 Their relative importance clear as he !  
 But for a special pleasure in the act  
 Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,  
 From Elys, to sing Elys ?—from each fit  
 Of rapture, to contrive a song of it ?  
 True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind  
 Into a treasure, helped himself to find  
 A beauty in himself ; for, see, he soared  
 By means of that mere snatch to many a hoard  
 Of fancies ; as some falling cone bears oft  
 The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft  
 To a dove's nest. Then how divine the cause  
 Such a performance should exact applause  
 From men if they have fancies too ? Can Fate  
 Decree they find a beauty separate  
 In the poor snatch itself . . . our Elys, there,  
 (" Her head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks  
 Coloured like honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanch'd the livelong summer ")—if they heard  
 Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,  
 And loved them as I love them who have run  
 These fingers through those fine locks, let the sun  
 Into the white cool skin . . . nay, thus I clutch  
 Those locks !—I needs must be a God to such.  
 Or if some few, above themselves, and yet  
 Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set  
 An impress on our gift ? So men believe  
 And worship what they know not, nor receive  
 Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, perchance.  
 Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance  
 Until by song each floating part be linked  
 To each, and all grow palpable, distinct ?  
 He pondered this.

Meanwhile sounds low and drear  
 Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near  
 And nearer, and the underwood was pushed  
 Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed  
 At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid ;  
 Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade  
 Came o'er the sky although 'twas midday yet :  
 You saw each half-shut downcast violet,  
 Flutter—a Roman bride, when they dispart

Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,  
 Holding that famous rape in memory still,  
 Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,  
 And looked thus, Eglamor would say,—indeed  
 'Tis Eglamor, no other, these precede  
 Home hither in the woods. 'Twere surely sweet  
 Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat  
 To sleep ! thought Naddo, who in person led  
 Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,  
 A scanty company ; for, sooth to say,  
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day :  
 Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends  
 Nigh weary ; still the death proposed amends :  
 Let us but get them safely through my song  
 And home again, quoth Naddo.

All along,

This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)  
 —This calm corpse with the loose flowers in its hand.  
 Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite :  
 For him indeed was Naddo's notion right  
 And Verse a temple-worship vague and vast,  
 A ceremony that withdrew the last  
 Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil  
 Which hid the holy place—should one so frail  
 Stand there without such effort ? or repine  
 That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine  
 He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,  
 The Power responded, and some sound or sight  
 Grew up, his own forever ! to be fixed  
 In rhyme, the beautiful, forever ; mixed  
 With his own life, unloosed when he should please,  
 Having it safe at hand, ready to ease  
 All pain, remove all trouble ; every time  
 He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,  
 Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love,  
 Faltering ; so distinct and far above  
 Himself, these fancies ! He, no genius rare,  
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air  
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up,  
 In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,  
 His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few  
 And their arrangement finds enough to do  
 For his best art. Then, how he loved that art !  
 The calling marking him a man apart  
 From men—one not to care, take counsel for  
 Cold hearts, comfortless faces (Eglamor  
 Was neediest of his tribe) since verse, the gift,  
 Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift

Away Apollo ! and the tale amounts  
 To this : when at Vicenza both her Counts  
 Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,  
 Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,  
 Reviling as he followed ; he for spite  
 Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night  
 Among the flames young Ecelin was born  
 Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn  
 From the roused populace hard on the rear  
 By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear  
 Was high ; into the thick Elcorte leapt,  
 Saved her, and died ; no creature left except  
 His child to thank. And when the full escape  
 Was known—how men impaled from chine to nape  
 Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned  
 Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned  
 Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,  
 Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well  
 Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,  
 Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince  
 Within a blind retreat where Adelaide  
 (For, once this notable discovery made,  
 The past at every point was understood)  
 Can harbour easily when times are rude,  
 When Este schemes for Palma—would retrieve  
 That pledge, when Mantua is not fit to leave  
 Longer unguarded with a vigilant eye,  
 Taurello bides there so ambiguously  
 (He who can have no motive now to moil  
 For his own fortunes since their utter spoil)  
 As it were worth while yet (goes the report)  
 To disengage himself from us. In short,  
 Apollo vanished ; a mean youth, just named  
 His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed  
 —How shall I phrase it ? Monarch of the World  
 But, on the morning that array was furled  
 For ever, and in place of one a slave  
 To longings, wild, indeed, but longings save  
 In dreams as wild, suppressed - one daring not  
 Assume the mastery such dreams allot,  
 Until a magical equipment, strength  
 Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose at length  
 (Content with unproved wits and failing frame)  
 In virtue of his simple Will, to claim  
 That mastery, no less—to do his best  
 With means so limited, and let the rest  
 Go by,—the seal was set : never again  
 Sordello could in his own sight remain

One of the many, one with hopes and cares  
 And interests nowise distinct from theirs,  
 Only peculiar in a thriveless store  
 Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;  
 Never again for him and for the crowd  
 A common law was challenged and allowed  
 If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied  
 By a mad impulse nothing justified  
 Short of Apollo's presence: the divorce  
 Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course  
 By any known example? Men no more  
 Compete with him than tree and flower before;  
 Himself, inactive, yet is greater far  
 Than such as act, each stooping to his star,  
 Acquiring thence his function; he has gained  
 The same result with meaner mortals trained  
 To strength or beauty, moulded to express  
 Each the idea that rules him; since no less  
 He comprehends that function, but can still  
 Embrace the others, take of Might his fill  
 With Richard as of Grace with Palma, mix  
 Their qualities, or for a moment fix  
 On one, abiding free meantime, uncramped  
 By any partial organ, never stamped  
 Strong, so to Strength turning all energies—  
 Wise, and restricted to becoming Wise—  
 That is, he loves not, nor possesses One  
 Idea that, star-like over, lures him on  
 To its exclusive purpose. Fortunate  
 This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate  
 A soul so various—took no casual mould  
 Of the first fancy and contracted, cold  
 Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change  
 As that. Whereas it left her free to range,  
 Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,  
 Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.  
 So, range, my soul! Who by self-consciousness,  
 The last drop of all beauty dost express—  
 The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence  
 For thee: while for the world, that can dispense  
 Wonder on men, themselves that wonder—make  
 A shift to love at second hand and take  
 Those for its idols who but idolize,  
 Themselves,—that loves the soul as strong, as wise,  
 Whose love is Strength, is Wisdom,—such shall bow  
 Surely in unexampled worship now,  
 Discerning me!—

(Dear monarch, I beseech,

Notice how lamentably wide a breach  
 Is here ! discovering this, discover too  
 What our poor world has possibly to do  
 With it ! As pigmy natures as you please—  
 So much the better for you ; take your ease !  
 Look on, and laugh ; style yourself God alone ;  
 Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone ;  
 All that is right enough : but why want us  
 To know that you yourself know thus and thus ?  
 Nay finish—)

—Bow to me conceiving all  
 Man's life, who see its blisses, great and small,  
 Afar—not tasting any ; no machine  
 To exercise my utmost will is mine,  
 Therefore mere consciousness for me !—Perceive  
 What I could do, a mastery believe,  
 Asserted and established to the throng  
 By their selected evidence of Song  
 Which now shall prove whate'er they are, or seek  
 To be, I am—who take no pains to speak,  
 Change no old standards of perfection, vex  
 With no strange forms created to perplex,  
 But mean perform their bidding and no more,  
 At their own satiating-point give o'er,  
 And each shall love in me the love that leads  
 His soul to its perfection. Song, not Deeds,  
 (For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook  
 Mankind no other organ ; He would look  
 For not another channel to dispense  
 His own volition and receive their sense  
 Of its existing but would be content,  
 Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent—  
 Nor should, for instance, Strength an outlet seek  
 And striving be admired, nor Grace bespeak  
 Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes,  
 Nor Wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods ;  
 But he would give and take on Song's one point :  
 Like some huge throbbing-stone that, poised a-joint,  
 Sounds to affect on its basaltic bed  
 Must sue in just one accent : tempests shed  
 Thunder, and raves the landstorm : only let  
 That key by any little noise be set—  
 The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch  
 On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch  
 Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,  
 However loud, however low—all lift  
 The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.

Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,

And this, for his, will hardly interfere !  
 Its businesses in blood and blaze this year  
 —But wile the hour away—a pastime slight  
 Till he shall step upon the platform : right !  
 And now thus much is settled, cast in rough,  
 Proved feasible, be counselled ! thought enough,  
 Slumber, Sordello ! any day will serve :  
 Were it a less digested plan ! how swerve  
 To-morrow ? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes  
 And watch the soaring hawk there ! Life escapes  
 Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er  
 His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,  
 Praying him visit Mantua and supply  
 A famished world.

The evening star was high  
 When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived  
 Before him : friends applauded, foes connived,  
 And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest  
 Angels, and all these angels would be blest  
 Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned  
 Goito manufacture. Then he found  
 (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)  
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,  
 A sore annoyance ; 'twas the song's effect  
 He cared for, scarce the song itself : reflect !  
 In the past life what might be singing's use ?  
 Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse  
 Praise, not the toilsome process which procured  
 That praise, enticed Apollo : dreams abjured,  
 No over-leaping means for ends—take both  
 For granted or take neither ! I am loth  
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's ;  
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors  
 Go pine ; the Master certes meant to waste  
 No effort, cautiously had probed the taste  
 He'd please anon : true bard, in short, disturb  
 His title if they could ; nor spur nor curb,  
 Fancy nor reason, wanting in him ; whence  
 The staple of his verses, common sense :  
 He built on Man's broad nature—gift of gifts  
 That power to build ! The world contented shifts  
 With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort  
 Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort  
 Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak  
 (The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)  
 With our herd's stupid sterling happiness  
 So plainly incompatible that—yes—

Yes—should a son of his improve the breed  
 And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed.  
 Well, there's Goito to retire upon  
 If the worst happen; best go stoutly on  
 Now! thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet!

You pother with your glossaries to get  
 A notion of the Troubadour's intent—  
 His Rondels, Tenzons, Virlai or Sirvent—  
 Much as you study arras how to twirl  
 His Angelot, plaything of page and girl  
 Once; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no!  
 Never quite reach what struck the people so,  
 As from the welter of their time he drew  
 Its elements successively to view,  
 Followed all actions backward on their course  
 And catching up, unmingled at the source,  
 Such a Strength, such a Weakness, added then  
 A touch or two, and turned them into Men.  
 Virtue took form, nor Vice refused a shape;  
 Here Heaven opened, there was Hell agape,  
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,  
 Sinner the other flared portentous by  
 A greedy People: then why stop, surprised  
 At his success? The scheme was realised  
 Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd  
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud  
 To speak, delicious homage to receive,  
 Bianca's breath to feel upon his sleeve  
 Who said, "But Anafest—why asks he less  
 Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,  
 It seemed too much but yestereve!" The youth  
 Who bade him earnestly "avow the truth,  
 You love Bianca, surely, from your song;  
 I knew I was unworthy!" soft or strong,  
 In poured such tributes ere he had arranged  
 Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,  
 Digested: courted thus at unawares,  
 In spite of his pretensions and his cares  
 He caught himself shamefully hankering  
 After your obvious petty joys that spring  
 From true life, fain relinquish pedestal  
 And condescend with pleasures—one and all  
 To be renounced, no doubt; for thus to chain  
 Himself to single joys and so refrain  
 From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,  
 His prime design; each joy must he abjure  
 Even for love of it.

He laughed : what sage  
 But perishes if from his magic page  
 He look because, at the first line, a proof  
 'Twas heard salutes him from the cavern roof?  
 On ! Give thyself, excluding aught beside,  
 To the day's task ; compel thy slave provide  
 Its utmost at the soonest ; turn the leaf  
 Thoroughly cowed ; these lays of thine, in brief—  
 Cannot men bear, now, something better ?—fly  
 A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry  
 Of essences ? the period sure has ceased  
 For such : present us with ourselves, at least,  
 Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates  
 Made flesh : wait not !

Awhile the poet waits  
 However. The first trial was enough :  
 He left imagining, to try the stuff  
 That held the imaged thing and, let it writhe  
 Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe  
 To reach the light—his Language. How he sought  
 The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought  
 That Language, welding words into the crude  
 Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude  
 Armour was hammered out, in time to be  
 Approved beyond the Roman panoply  
 Melted to make it, boots not. This obtained  
 With some ado, no obstacle remained  
 To using it ; accordingly he took  
 An action with its actors, quite forsook  
 Himself to live in each, returned anon  
 With the result—a creature, and by one  
 And one proceeded leisurely equip  
 Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.  
 Accomplished ! Listen, Mantuans ! Fond essay !  
 Piece after piece that armour broke away  
 Because perceptions whole, like that he sought  
 To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought  
 As language : Thought may take Perception's place  
 But hardly co-exist in any case,  
 Being its mere presentment—of the Whole  
 By Parts, the Simultaneous and the Sole  
 By the Successive and the Many. Lacks  
 The crowd perceptions ? painfully it tacks  
 Together thoughts Sordello, needing such,  
 Has rent perception into : it's to clutch  
 And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,  
 Destroy : as difficult obtain a Muse  
 In sport, as be Apollo. For the rest,



E'en if some wondrous vehicle express  
 The whole dream, what impertinence in me  
 So to express it, who myself can be  
 The dream ! nor, on the other hand, are they,  
 I sing to over-likely to suppose  
 A higher than the highest I present  
 Now, and they praise already : be content  
 Both parties, rather ; they with the old verse,  
 And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse !  
 A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings  
 The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings  
 Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,  
 As might Apollo from the sudden corpse  
 Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.  
 He set to celebrating the exploits  
 Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came  
 The world's revenge : their pleasure now his aim  
 Merely—what was it ? Not to play the fool  
 So much as learn our lesson in your school,  
 Replied the world : he found that every time  
 He gained applause by any given rhyme  
 His auditory recognised no jot  
 As he intended, and mistaking not  
 Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce  
 Sufficient to believe him—All at once.  
 His Will . . . conceive it caring for his Will !  
 —Mantuan, the main of them, admiring still  
 How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,  
 Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)  
 His fingers' ends ; while past the praise-tide swept  
 To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept,  
 The true meed for true merit—His abates  
 Into a sort he most repudiates,  
 And on them angrily he turns. Who were  
 The Mantuan, after all, that he should care  
 About their recognition, ay or no ?  
 In spite of the convention months ago,  
 (Why blink the truth) was not he forced to help  
 This same ungrateful audience, every whelp  
 Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers  
 With the bright band of those Goito years,  
 As erst he toiled for flower or tree ? Why there  
 Sat Palma ! Adelaide's funereal hair  
 Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed  
 A fairy dust upon that multitude  
 Although he feigned to take them by themselves ;  
 His giants dignified those puny elves,

Sublimed their faint applause. In short he found  
 Himself still footing a delusive round,  
 Remote as ever from the self-display  
 He meant to compass, hampered every way  
 By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then  
 Continue, make believe to find in men  
 A use he found not ?

Weeks, months, years went by ;

And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly,  
 Sundered in twain ; each spectral part at strife  
 With each ; one jarred against another life ;  
 The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man  
 Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran  
 Here, there ; let slip no opportunities  
 Forsooth, as pitiful beside the prize  
 To drop on him some no-time and acquit  
 His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit)  
 That waiving any compromise between  
 No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen  
 Beyond most methods—of incurring scoff  
 From the Man-portion not to be put off  
 With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme  
 Though ne'er so bright ; which sauntered forth in dream,  
 Dress'd any how, nor waited mystic frames,  
 Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,  
 But just his sorry self ; who yet might be  
 Sorrier for aught he in reality  
 Achieved, so pinioned that the Poet-part,  
 Fondling, in turn of fancy, Verse ; the Art  
 Developing his soul a thousand ways ;  
 Potent, by its assistance, to amaze  
 The multitude with majesties, convince  
 Each sort of nature that same nature's prince  
 Accosted it : language, the makeshift, grew  
 Into a bravest of expedients, too ;  
 Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown  
 Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone  
 Sufficed : while, out of dream, his day's work went  
 To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent—  
 So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge  
 Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge  
 A minute's toil that missed its due reward !  
 But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,  
 John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,  
 That on the sea, with open in his hand  
 A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.

And if internal struggles to be one,  
 That frittered him incessantly piece-meal,

Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real  
 Mantuans ! intruding ever with some call  
 To action while he pondered, once for all,  
 Which looked the easier effort—to pursue  
 This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn t<sup>h</sup>rough  
 The present ill-appreciated stage  
 Of self-revelment and compel the age  
 Know him ; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake  
 From out his lethargy and nobly shake  
 Off timid habits of denial, mix  
 With men, enjoy like men : ere he could fix  
 On aught, in rushed the Mantuans ; much they cared  
 For his perplexity ! Thus unprepared,  
 The obvious if not only shelter lay  
 In deeds the dull conventions of his day  
 Prescribed the like of him : why not be glad  
 'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,  
 Submits to this and that established rule ?  
 Let Vidal change or any other fool  
 His murrey-coloured robe for philamot  
 And crop his hair ; so skin-deep, is it not,  
 Such vigour ? Then, a sorrow to the heart,  
 His talk ! Whatever topics they might start  
 Had to be groped for in his consciousness  
 Strait, and as strait delivered them by guess :  
 Only obliged to ask himself, " What was,"  
 A speedy answer followed, but, alas,  
 One of God's large ones, tardy to condense  
 Itself into a period ; answers whence  
 A tangle of conclusions must be stripp'd  
 At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipp'd,  
 They matched rare specimens the Mantua flock  
 Regaled him with, each talker from his stock  
 Of sorted o'er opinions, every stage,  
 Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,  
 Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,  
 Sweet-sour, all tastes to take : a practice which  
 He too had not impossibly attained,  
 Once either of those fancy-flights restrained ;  
 For, at conjecture how the words appear  
 To others, playing there what passes here,  
 And occupied abroad by what he spurned  
 At home, 'twas slipt the occasion he returned  
 To seize : he'd strike that lyre adroitly—speech,  
 Would but a twenty cubit plectre reach ;  
 A clever hand, consummate instrument  
 Were both brought close ! each excellency went  
 For nothing else. The question Naddo asked

Had just a life-time moderately tasked  
 To answer, Naddo's fashion ; more disgust  
 And more ; why move his soul, since move it must  
 At minute's notice or as good it failed  
 To move at all ? The end was, he retailed  
 Some ready-made opinion, put to use  
 This quip, that maxim—ventured reproduce  
 Gestures and tones—at any folly caught  
 Serving to finish with, nor too much sought  
 If false or true 'twas spoken ; praise and blame  
 Of what he said grew pretty well the same  
 —Meantime awards to meantime acts : his soul,  
 Unequal to the compassing a Whole,  
 Saw in a tenth part less and less to strive  
 About. And as for Men in turn . . . contrive  
 Who could to take eternal interest  
 In them, so hate the worst, so love the best !  
 Though in pursuance of his passive plan  
 He hailed, decried the proper way.

As Man

So figured he ; and how as Poet ? Verse  
 Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,  
 That his poor piece of daily work to do  
 Was not sink under any rivals ; who  
 Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,  
 Tuned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,  
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,  
 As knops that stud some alnug to the pith  
 Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse  
 Than pursed up eyelids of a river-horse  
 Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breese  
 Ha, ha ! Of course he might compete with these  
 But—but—

Observe a pompion-twine afloat ;  
 Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat—  
 Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,  
 The entire surface of the pool to boot.  
 So could I pluck a cup, put in one song  
 A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,  
 Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.  
 How should externals satisfy my soul ?  
 Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe  
 (Hazardèd Naddo) finds ; the man can't stoop  
 To sing us out, quoth he, a mere romance ;  
 He'd fain do better than the best, enhance  
 The subjects' rarity, work problems out  
 Therewith : now you're a bard, a bard past doubt,  
 And no philosopher ; why introduce

Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use  
 In poetry—which still must be, to strike,  
 Based upon common sense; there's nothing like  
 Appealing to our nature! what beside  
 Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried  
 In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!  
 The man, said we, tells his own joys and woes—  
 We'll trust him. Would you have your songs endure?  
 Build on the human heart!—Why to be sure  
 Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs,  
 Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares  
 To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,  
 That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,  
 Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do  
 When they have got their calm! Nay, is it true  
 Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?  
 Perhaps! But these are matters one may probe  
 Too deeply for poetic purposes:  
 Rather select a theory that . . . yes  
 Laugh! what does that prove? . . . stations you midway  
 And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,  
 That's rank injustice done me! I restrict  
 The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked  
 Out of a host of warriors, statesmen—did  
 I tell you? Very like! as well you hid  
 That sense of power you have! True bards believe  
 Us able to achieve what they achieve—  
 That is, just nothing—in one point abide  
 Profounder simpletons than all beside:  
 Oh ay! The knowledge that you are a bard  
 Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!  
 So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe  
 Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe  
 What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips—your louse  
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,  
 Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer.  
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear  
 By implements it sedulous employs  
 To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise  
 Sordello? fifty creepers to elude  
 At once! They settled stanchly; shame ensued:  
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb  
 To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,  
 As Naddo styled it! 'Twas not worth oppose  
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those  
 He aimed at getting rid of; better think  
 Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink  
 Back expeditiously to his safe place,

And chew the cud—what he and what his race  
 Were really, each of them. Yet even this  
 Conformity was partial. He would miss  
 Some point, brought into contact with them ere  
 Assured in what small segment of the sphere  
 Of his existence they attended him ;  
 Whence blunders, falsehoods rectify—a grim  
 List—slur it over ! How ? If dreams were tried,  
 His will swayed sicklily from side to side  
 Not merely neutralized his waking act  
 But tended e'en in fancy to distract  
 The intermediate will, the choice of means :  
 He lost the art of dreaming : Mantua scenes  
 Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,  
 Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er  
 Of gallantries ; abjure the soul, content  
 With body, therefore ! Scarcely had he bent  
 Himself in dream thus low when matter fast  
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast  
 And task it duly ; by advances slight,  
 The simple stuff becoming composite,  
 Count Lori grew Apollo—best recall  
 His fancy ! Then would some rough peasant-Paul  
 Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance  
 His gay apparel o'er ; that countenance  
 Gathered his shattered fancy into one,  
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone  
 Sufficed the grey Paulician : by and by  
 To balance the ethereality  
 Passions were needed ; foiled he sank again.

Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('tis time explain)  
 Because a sudden sickness set it free  
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee  
 Her mountain hive Romano swarmed ; at once  
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons  
 Blackened the valley. I am sick too, old,  
 Half crazed I think ; what good's the Kaiser's gold  
 To such an one ? God help me ! for I catch  
 My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch—  
 He bears that double breastplate on, they say,  
 So many minutes less than yesterday !  
 Beside Monk Hilary is on his knees  
 Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please  
 Exact a punishment for many things  
 You know and some you never knew ; which brings  
 To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix  
 And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's  
 And Ecelin's betrothed ; the Count himself

Must get my Palma ; Ghibellin and Guelf  
 Mean to embrace each other. So began  
 Romano's missive to his fighting-man  
 Taurello on the Tuscan's death, away  
 With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay  
 Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap  
 Out of Vesuvius' mount like this mishap  
 Startled him. That accursed Vicenza ! I  
 Absent, and she selects this time to die !  
 Ho, fellows, for Vicenza ! Half a score  
 Of horses ridden dead he stood before  
 Romano in his reeking spurs : too late—  
 Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,  
 The chieftain stammered ; let me die in peace—  
 Forget me ! Was it I e'er craved increase  
 Of rule ? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst  
 Against the Father : as you found me first  
 So leave me now. Forgive me ! Palma, sure,  
 Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—  
 Only be pacified !

The country rung  
 With such a piece of news : on every tongue  
 How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,  
 Had done a long day's service, so might doff  
 The green and yellow to recover breath  
 At Mantua, whither, since Retrude's death,  
 (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride  
 From Otho's house he carried to reside  
 At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile  
 A structure worthy her imperial style,  
 The gardens raise, their tenantry enshrine  
 She never lived to see) although his line  
 Was ancient in her archives and she took  
 A pride in him, that city, nor forsook  
 Her child though he forsook himself and spent  
 A prowess on Romano surely meant  
 For his own purposes—he ne'er resorts  
 If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)  
 With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice  
 Were shows to greet him. Take a friend's advice,  
 Quoth Naddo to Sordello, nor be rash  
 Because your rivals (nothing can abash  
 Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best  
 To sound the great man's welcome ; 'tis a test,  
 Remember ; Strojavacca looks asquint,  
 The rough fat sloven ; and there's plenty hint  
 Your pinions have received of late a shock—  
 Out-soar them, cobsवान of the silver flock !

Sing well ! A signal wonder song's no whit  
Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit ;  
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring  
The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing ;  
So quits, a last shift, Mantua—slow, alone :  
Out of that aching brain, a very stone,  
Song must be struck. What occupies that front ?  
Just how he was more awkward than his wont  
The night before, when Naddo, who had seen  
Taurello on his progress, praised the mien  
For dignity no crosses could affect—  
Such was a joy, and might not he detect  
A satisfaction if established joys  
Were proved imposture ? Poetry annoys  
Its utmost : wherefore fret ? Verses may come  
Or keep away ! And thus he wandered, dumb  
Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,  
On a blind hill-top ; down the gorge he went,  
Yielding himself up as to an embrace ;  
The moon came out ; like features of a face  
A querulous fraternity of pines,  
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines  
Also came out, made gradually up  
The picture ; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup  
And castle. He had dropped through one defile  
He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile  
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapt  
Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they lapped  
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant  
To wear his soul away in discontent  
Brooding on fortune's malice : heart and brain  
Swelled ; he expanded to himself again  
As that thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail  
Pushing between cat's head or ibis' tail  
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth  
--Suffered remain just as it sprung to soothe  
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet  
Well in the chilly green-glazed minaret—  
When rooted up the sunny day she died  
And flung into the common court beside  
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello ! Soon  
Was he low muttering beneath the moon  
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,  
How from his purposes maintained before  
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.  
Ah, the slim castle ! dwindled of late years,  
But more mysterious ; gone to ruin—trails



Of vine thro' every loop-hole. Nought avails  
 The night as, torch in hand, he must explore  
 The maple chamber—did I say its floor  
 Was made of intersecting cedar beams?  
 Worn now with gaps so large there blew cold streams  
 Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear  
 Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear  
 In the blind darkness water-drops. The nests  
 And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests  
 Empty and smelling of the iris-root  
 The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit  
 Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,  
 Said the remaining women. Last, he lay  
 Beside the Carian group reserved and still.  
 The Body, the Machine for Acting Will  
 Had been at the commencement proved unfit;  
 That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it,  
 Mankind—no fitter: was the Will itself  
 In fault?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf  
 Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;  
 Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,  
 I shall be king again! as he withdrew  
 The envied scarf; into the font he threw  
 His crown.

Next day, no poet! Wherefore? asked  
 Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs masked  
 As devils ended; don't a song come next?  
 The master of the pageant looked perplex  
 Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief;  
 His Highness knew what poets were: in brief,  
 Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right  
 To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,  
 One must receive their nature in its length  
 And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!  
 So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,  
 The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,  
 Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,  
 And nodded that the bull-chase might begin.

---

## BOOK THE THIRD.

---

AND the font took them : let our laurels lie !  
 Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly  
 Because once more Goito gets, once more,  
 Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er  
 And the suspended life begins anew ;  
 Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue  
 That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict embrace,  
 Putting aside the past, shall soon efface  
 Its print as well--factitious humours grown  
 Over the true--loves, hatreds not his own--  
 And turn him pure as some forgotten vest  
 Woven of painted byssus, silkiest  
 Tufting the 'Tyrrhene wheelk's pearl-sheeted lip,  
 Left welter where a trireme let it slip  
 I' the sea and vexed a Satrap ; so the stain  
 O' the world forsakes Sordello with its pain  
 Its pleasure : how the tint loosening escapes  
 Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar shapes  
 Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,  
 Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,  
 Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh  
 For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die :  
 The last face glances through the eglantines,  
 The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines  
 This May of the Machine supplied by Thought  
 To compass Self-perception .dly sought  
 By forcing half himself--an insane pulse  
 Of a God's blood on clay it could convulse  
 Never transmute--on human sights and sounds  
 To watch the other half with ; irksome bounds  
 It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed  
 Forever. Better sure be unrevealed  
 Than part revealed : Sordello well or ill  
 Is finished with : what further use of Will  
 ---Point in the prime idea not realised,  
 An oversight, inordinately prized  
 No less, and pampered with enough of each  
 Delight to prove the whole above its reach.

To need become all natures yet retain  
 The law of one's own nature—to remain  
 Oneself, yet yearn . . . aha, that chesnut, think,  
 To yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,  
 With those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs staunch  
 March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!  
 Will and the means to show will, great and small  
 Material, spiritual, abjure them all  
 Save any so distinct as to be left  
 Amuse, not tempt become: and, thus bereft,  
 Say, Just as I am fashioned would I be!  
 Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now but me  
 Thou visitest to comfort and befriend;  
 Swim thou into my heart and there an end  
 Since I possess thee! nay thus shut mine eyes  
 And know, quite know, by that heart's fall and rise  
 If thou dost bury thee in clouds and when  
 Out-standest: wherefore practise upon Men  
 To make that plainer to myself?

Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year  
 Wasted: or simply notice change in him—  
 How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim  
 And satiate with receiving. Some distress  
 Occasioned, too, a sort of consciousness  
 Under the imbecility; nought kept  
 That down: he slept, but was aware he slept  
 And frustrate so: as who brainsick made pact  
 Erst with the overhanging cataract  
 To deafen him, yet may distinguish now  
 His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.  
 To finish. One declining Autumn day—  
 Few birds about the heaven chill and grey,  
 No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods—  
 He sauntered home complacently, their moods  
 According, his and Nature's. Every spark  
 Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark  
 The embers that the Troubadour who sung  
 Hundreds of songs forgot, its tricks the tongue,  
 Its craft the brain, how either brought to pass  
 Singing so e'er; that faculty might class  
 With any of Apollo's now. The year  
 Began to find its early promise zere  
 As well. Thus beauty vanishes! Your stone  
 Outlasts your flesh. Nature's and his youth gone,  
 They left the world to you and wished you joy.  
 When stopping his benevolent employ  
 A presage shuddered through the welkin; harsh

The earth's remonstrance followed. 'Twas the marsh  
 Gone of a sudden. Mincio in its place  
 Laughed a broad water in next morning's face  
 And, where the mists broke up immense and white  
 I' the steady wind, burned like a spilt of light  
 Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.  
 And here was Nature, bound by the same bars  
 Of fate with him !

No : youth once gone is gone  
 Deeds let escape are never to be done :  
 Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year, but us—  
 Oh forfeit I unalterably thus  
 My chance ? nor two lives wait me, this to spend  
 Learning save that ? Nature has leisure mend  
 Mistake, occasion, knows she will recur—  
 Landslip or seabreach how affects it her  
 With her magnificent resources ? I  
 Must perish once and perish utterly !  
 Not any strollings now at even-close  
 Down the field-path, Sordello, by thorn-rows  
 Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire  
 And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire  
 She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first  
 Woo her the snow-month—ah, but ere she durst  
 Answer 'twas April ! Linden-flower-time-long  
 Her eyes were on the ground ; 'tis July, strong  
 Now ; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm  
 The woodside, here or by the village elm  
 That holds the moon she meets you, somewhat pale,  
 But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil  
 And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)  
 Of love—heart's love—your heart's love that endures  
 Till death. Tush ! No mad mixing with the rout  
 Of haggard ribalds wandering about  
 The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house  
 Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse  
 Parading to the gay Palermitans,  
 Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans  
 From Nuocera, those tall grave dazzling Norse,  
 Clear-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,  
 Queens of the caves of jet stalactites  
 He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,  
 The blind night seas without a saving-star,  
 And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,  
 Sordello, here, mollitious alcoves gilt  
 Superb as Byzant-domes that devils built  
 — Ah, Byzant, there again ! no chance to go  
 Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,

Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,  
 Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,  
 Through vanquished Byzant to have noted him  
 What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,  
 'Twere fittest we transport to Venice' Square—  
 Flattered and promised life to touch them there  
 Soon, by his fervid sons of senators!  
 No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars—  
 Ah, fragments of a Whole ordained to be!  
 Points in the life I waited! what are ye  
 But roundels of a ladder which appeared  
 Awhile the very platform it was reared  
 To lift me on—that Happiness I find  
 Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind  
 Instinct which bade forego you all unless  
 Ye led me past yourselves? Ay, Happiness  
 Awaited me; the way life should be used  
 Was to acquire, and deeds like you conducted  
 To teach it by a self-revelment (deemed  
 That very use too long). Whatever seemed  
 Progress to that was Pleasure; aught that stayed  
 My reaching it—No Pleasure. I have laid  
 The roundels down; I climb not; still aloft  
 The platform stretches! Bliss strong and soft  
 I dared not entertain elude me; yet  
 Never of what they promised could I get  
 A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd,  
 Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,  
 However slight, distinct from what they See,  
 However bounded: Happiness must be  
 To feed the first by gleanings from the last,  
 Attain its qualities, and slow or fast  
 Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife  
 By transmutation is the Use of Life,  
 The Alien turning Native to the soul  
 Or body—which instructs me; I am whole  
 There and demand a Palma; had the world  
 Been from my soul to a like distance hurled  
 'Twere Happiness to make it one with me—  
 Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,  
 Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend  
 In spirit now; and this done, what's to blend  
 With? Nought is Alien here—my Will  
 Owns all already; yet can turn it still  
 Less Native, since my Means to correspond  
 With Will are so unworthy 'twas my bond  
 To tread the very ones that tantalize  
 Me now into a grave, never to rise—

I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?  
 Next Age or no ? Shall its Sordello try  
 Clue after clue and catch at last the clue  
 I miss, that's underneath my finger too,  
 Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning traced  
 Deeper, some petty consequence embraced  
 Closer ! Why fled I Mantua then ? Complained  
 So much my Will was fettered, yet remained  
 Content within a tether half the range  
 I could assign it ?—able to exchange  
 My ignorance, I felt, for knowledge, and  
 Idle because I could thus understand—  
 Could e'en have penetrated to its core  
 Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,  
 Preferred elaborating in the dark  
 My casual stuff, by any wretched spark  
 Born of my predecessors, tho' one stroke  
 Of mine had brought the flame forth ! Mantua's yoke,  
 My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind,  
 And my own matter just to bring my mind  
 Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,  
 Each object suffered stifle in the mist  
 Convention, hazard, blindness could impose  
 In their relation to myself.

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs  
 Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,  
 Onward.

Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,  
 Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops  
 Under a humid finger ; while there fleets  
 Outside the screen a pageant time repeats  
 Never again ! To be deposed—immured  
 Clandestinely—still petted, still assured  
 To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight  
 Fleeting meanwhile ! 'Tis noontide—wreak ere night  
 Somehow one's will upon it rather ! Slake  
 This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take  
 That serves ! A blasted bud displays you, torn,  
 Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn ;  
 But who divines what petal coats o'erclasp  
 Of the bulb dormant in the Mummy's grasp  
 Taurello sent . . .

Taurello ? Palma sent

Your Trouvere, (Naddo interposing leant  
 Over the lost bard's shoulder) and believe,  
 You cannot more reluctantly conceive  
 Than I pronounce her message : we depart

Together : what avail a poet's heart  
 Verona and her gauds ? five blades of grass  
 Suffice him. News ? Why, where your marish was.  
 On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke  
 I' the valley like a spout of hell new-broke.  
 Oh, the world's tidings ! little thanks, I guess,  
 For them. The father of our Patroness,  
 Playing Taurello an astounding trick,  
 Parts between Ecelin and Alberic  
 His wealth and goes into a convent : both  
 Wed Guelfs : the Count and Palma plighted troth  
 A week since at Verona : and she wants  
 You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chants  
 Ere Richard storms Ferrara. Your response  
 To Palma ? Wherefore jest ? Depart at once ?  
 A good resolve ! In truth I hardly hoped  
 So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped  
 Out wisdom in the wilds here ? --Thoughts may be  
 Over-poetical for poetry ?  
 Pearl-white you minstrels liken Palma's neck,  
 And yet what spoils an orient like some speck  
 Of genuine white turning its own white grey ?  
 You take me ? Curse the cicales !

One more day--

One eve--appears Verona ! Many a group,  
 (You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop  
 On lynx and ounce, was gathering--Christendom  
 Sure to receive, whate'er it might be, from  
 The evening's purpose cheer or detriment  
 Since Friedrich only waited some event  
 Like this of Ghibellins establishing  
 Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King  
 Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage  
 Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage  
 His barons from the burghers, and restore  
 The rule of Charlemagne broken of yore  
 By Hildebrand. That eve-long each by each  
 Sordello sate and Palma : little speech  
 At first in that dim closet, face with face  
 Despite the tumult in the market place  
 Exchanging quick low laughters : now would gush  
 Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,  
 A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise--  
 But for the most part their two histories  
 Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.  
 And so the night flew on with its alarms  
 Till in burst one of Palma's retinue ;  
 Now, Lady, gasped he. Then arose the two

And leaned into Verona's air dead still.  
 A balcony lay black beneath until  
 Out 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men  
 Came on it and harangued the people : then  
 Sea-like that people surging to and fro  
 Shouted, Hale forth the Carroch—trumpets, ho,  
 A flourish ! run it in the ancient grooves—  
 Back from the bell ! Hammer ! that whom behooves  
 May hear the League is up ! Peal ! learn who list,  
 Verona means not be the first break tryst  
 To-morrow with the League.

Enough. Now turn—  
 Over the Eastern cypresses : discern  
 Is any beacon set a-glimmer ?

Rang  
 The air with shouts that overpowered the clang  
 Of the incessant carroch even. Haste—  
 The Candle's at the gate-way ! ere it waste  
 Each soldier stands beside, armed fit to march  
 With Tiso Sampier through that Eastern arch !  
 Ferrara's succoured, Palma !

Once again  
 They sate together ; some strange thing in train  
 To say, so difficult was Palma's place  
 In taking, with a coy fastidious grace  
 Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed ;  
 But when she felt she held her friend indeed  
 Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant  
 Her lessons ; telling of another want  
 Goito's quiet nourished than his own ;  
 Palma—to serve, as him—be served, alone  
 Importing ; Agnes' milk so neutralised  
 The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised  
 If, while Sordello nature captive led,  
 In dream was Palma wholly subjected  
 To some out-soul which dawned not though she pined  
 Delaying still (pursued she) heart and mind  
 To live : how dared I let expand the force  
 Within me till some out-soul whose resource  
 It grew for should direct it ? Every law  
 Of life, its fitnesses and every flaw,  
 Must that determine whose corporeal shape  
 Would be no other than the prime escape  
 And revelation to me of a Will  
 Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable  
 Above except the point I was to know  
 Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow  
 So far, so much ; as now it signified  
 Which earthly shape it henceforth chose to guide



Me by whose lip selected to declare  
 Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear :  
 —The first of intimations, whom to love ;  
 The next, how love him. And that orb above  
 The castle-covert and the mountain-close  
 Slow in appearing, if beneath arose  
 Cravings, aversions, and our green precinct  
 Take pride in me at unawares distinct  
 With this or that endowment, how repress  
 At once such jetting power shrank to the rest !  
 Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave  
 My spirit thence unfitted to receive  
 The consummating spell ?—that spell so near  
 Moreover : waits he not the waking year ?  
 His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe  
 By this ; to welcome him fresh runnels stripe  
 The thawed ravines ; because of him the wind  
 Walks like a herald. I shall surely find  
 Him now !

And chief that earnest April morn  
 Of Richard's Love-court was it time, so worn  
 And white her cheek, so idly her blood beat,  
 Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet  
 And saying as she prompted ; till outburst  
 One face from all the faces—not then first  
 She knew it ; where in maple-chamber glooms,  
 Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms  
 Advanced it ever ? Men's acknowledgment  
 Sanctioned her own : 'twas taken, Palma's bent,  
 She said.

And day by day the Tuscan dumb  
 Sat scheming, scheming ; Ecelin would come  
 Gaunt, scared, Cesano baffles me, he'd say :  
 Better I fought it out my father's way !  
 Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats  
 And you and your Taurello yonder—what's  
 Romano's business there ? An hour's concern  
 To cure the froward Chief !—induced return  
 Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes,  
 Wound up to persevere, his enterprise  
 Marked out anew, its exigent of wit  
 Apportioned, she at liberty to sit  
 And scheme against the next emergence, I—  
 To covet what I deemed their sprite, made fly  
 Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope  
 For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope  
 Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness  
 To blank smooth snow : what semblance of success

To any of my plans for making you  
 Romano's lord? That chief—her children too—  
 There Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,  
 And the insuperable Tuscan here  
 Stayed me! But one wild eve that Lady died  
 In her lone chamber: only I beside:  
 Taurello far at Naples, and my sire  
 At Padua, Ecelin away in ire  
 With Alberic: she held me thus—a clutch  
 To make our spirits as our bodies touch—  
 And so began flinging the past up, heaps  
 Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps  
 Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,  
 Fragments of many miserable schemes,  
 Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the last—  
 'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past,  
 How . . . ay, she told me, gathering her face  
 That face of hers into one arch-grinace  
 To die with . . .

Friend, 'tis gone! but not the fear  
 Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.  
 Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak,  
 When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak  
 —Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark, for in  
 Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin  
 (How summoned who divines?) looking as if  
 Part understood he why his mate lay stiff  
 Already in my arms, for, Girl, how must  
 I manage Este in the matter thrust  
 Upon me, how unravel their bad coil?  
 Since (he declared) 'tis on your brow—a soil  
 Like hers there! then said in a breath he lacked  
 No counsel after all, had signed no pact  
 With devils, nor was treason here or there,  
 Goito or Vicenza, his affair:  
 He'd bury it in Adelaide's deep grave  
 And begin life afresh, nor, either, slave  
 For any Friedrich's or Taurello's sake!  
 What bootied him to meddle or to make  
 In Lombardy? 'Twas afterward I knew  
 The meaning of his promise to undo  
 All she had done—why marriages were made,  
 New friendships entered on, old followers paid  
 With curses for their pains, people's amaze  
 At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise  
 He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head  
 Over a friar's neck, had vowed, he said,  
 Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife

And child were saved there, to bestow his life  
On God, his gettings on the Church.

Exiled

Within Goito, still that dream beguiled  
Her days and nights; 'twas found the orb she sought  
To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,  
No other: how then serve it?—authorise  
Him and Romano mingle destinies?  
And straight Romano's angel stood beside  
Her who had else been Boniface's bride,  
For Salinguerra 'twas, the neck low bent,  
And voice lightened to music as he meant  
To learn not teach me how Romano waxed,  
Wherefore it waned and why if I relaxed  
My grasp (think's I!) would drop a thing effete,  
Frayed by itself, unequal to complete  
The course and counting every step astray  
A gain so much. Romano every way  
Stable, a House now—why this starting back  
Into the very outset of its track?  
This recent patching-principle allied  
Our House with other Houses—what beside  
Concerned the apparition, yon grim Knight  
Who followed Conrad hither in such plight  
His utmost wealth was reckoned in his steed?  
For Ecclo, that prowler, was decreed  
A task in the beginning hazardous  
To him as ever task can be to us,  
But did the weather-beaten thief despair  
When first our crystal cincture of warm air,  
That binds the Trivisan as its spice-belt  
(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt,  
Furtive he pierced and Este was to face—  
Despaired Saponian Strength of Lombard Grace?  
Said he for making surer aught made sure,  
Maturing what already was mature?  
No; his heart prompted Ecclo, Confront  
Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Wont.  
Discard three-parts your nature and adopt  
The rest as an advantage! Old Strength propped  
The earliest of Podestas among  
The Vincentines, no less than, while there sprung  
His Palace up in Padua like a threat,  
Their noblest spied a Grace unnoticed yet  
In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained,  
Romano was established; has remained—  
For are you not Italian, truly peer  
With Este? Azzo better soothes it ear\*

\* [Sic.]

Than Alberic ? or is this lion's-crine  
 From over-mount (this yellow hair of mine)  
 So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock ?  
 (Thus went he on with something of a mock)  
 Wherefore recoil then from the very fate  
 Conceded you, refuse to imitate  
 Your model farther ? Este long since left  
 Being mere Este : as a blade its heft,  
 Este requires the Pope to further him :  
 And you, the Kaiser : whom your father's whim  
 Foregoes or, better, never shall forego  
 If Palma dares pursue what Ecelo  
 Commenced but Ecelin desists from : just  
 As Adelaide of Susa could intrust  
 Her donative (that's Piedmont to the Pope,  
 The Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope  
 'Twixt France and Italy) to the superb  
 Matilda's perfecting,—lest aught disturb  
 Our Adelaide's great counter-project for  
 Giving her Trentine to the Emperor  
 With passage here from Germany, shall you  
 Take it, my slender plodding talent, too—  
 Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

He

As Patron of the scattered family  
 Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit  
 Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit  
 Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,  
 Nothing remains, Taurello said, but wait  
 Some rash procedure : Palma was the link,  
 As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink  
 From losing Palma : judge if we advance  
 Your father's method your inheritance !  
 The day she was betrothed to Boniface  
 At Padua by Taurello's self, took place  
 The outrage of the Ferrarese : again,  
 That day she sought Verona with the train  
 Agreed for, by Taurello's policy  
 Convicting Richard of the fault, since she  
 Were present to annul or to confirm,  
 Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,  
 Quitted Verona for the siege.

And now

What glory may engird Sordello's brow  
 For this ? A month since Olierio sunk  
 All Ecelin that was into a Monk ;  
 But how could Salinguerra so forget  
 His liege of thirty summers as grudge ye

One effort to recover him ? He sent  
 Forthwith the tidings of the Town's event  
 To Oliero, adding, he, despite  
 The recent folly, recognised his right  
 To order such proceedings : should he wring  
 Its uttermost advantage out, or fling  
 This chance away ? If not him, who was Head  
 Now of the House ? Through me that missive sped  
 My father's answer will by me return.  
 Behold ! For him, he writes, no more concern  
 With strife than for his children with the plots  
 Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots  
 For aye : Taurello shall no more subserve,  
 Nor Ecelin impose ! Lest this unnerve  
 Him therefore at this juncture, slack his grip  
 Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,  
 I, in his sons' default (who, mating with  
 Este, forsake Romano as the frith  
 Its mainsea for the firnland that makes head  
 Against) I stand, Romano ; in their stead  
 Assume the station they desert, and give  
 Still, as the Kaiser's Representative,  
 Taurello licence he demands. Midnight—  
 Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light  
 Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed  
 Like yours disguised together, may precede  
 The arbitrators to Ferrara ; reach  
 Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach  
 The rest ! then say if I have misconceived  
 Your destiny, too readily believed  
 The Kaiser's cause your own !

And Palma's fled.

Though no affirmative disturbs the head  
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er  
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,  
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be  
 Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,  
 Soul to their body—have their aggregate  
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate  
 Though he should live, a centre of disgust  
 Even, apart, core of the outward crust  
 He vivifies, assimilates. For thus  
 Bring I Sordello to the rapturous  
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round  
 Of life was quite accomplished and he found  
 Not only that a soul, howe'er its might,  
 Is insufficient to its own delight,  
 Both in corporeal organs and in skill

By means of such to body forth its Will—  
 And, after, insufficient to apprise  
 Men, of that Will, oblige them recognise  
 The Hid by the Revealed—but that,—the last  
 Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,  
 His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void  
 The throne, might sit there, suffer he enjoyed  
 The same a varied and divine array  
 Incapable of homage the first way  
 Nor fit to render incidentally  
 Tribute connived at, taken by the by,  
 In joys: and if, thus warranted rescind  
 The ignominious exile of mankind  
 Whose proper service, ascertained intact  
 As yet (by Him to be themselves made act,  
 Not watch Sordello acting each of them)  
 Was to secure—if the true diadem  
 Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank  
 The wisdom of that golden Palma, thank  
 Verona's Lady in her Citadel  
 Founded by Gaulish Brennus legends tell—  
 And truly when she left him the sun reared  
 A head like the first clamberer's that peered  
 A-top the Capitol, his face on flame  
 With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.  
 Nor slight too much my rhymes—"that spring, dispread,  
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
 Like an escape of angels!" Rather say  
 My transcendental platan! mounting gay  
 (An archimage so courts a novice-queen)  
 With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen  
 Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon  
 With coloured buds, then glowing like the moon  
 One mild flame, last a pause, a burst, and all  
 Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,  
 Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,  
 Ending the weird work prosecuted just  
 For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,  
 Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark  
 Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so!  
 Only as good my soul were suffered go  
 O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside  
 Entrance thy synod, as a God may glide  
 Out of the world he fills and leave it mute  
 A myriad ages as we men compute,  
 Returning into it without a break  
 I' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake  
 O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, note  
 In just such songs as Eglamor, say, wrote  
 With heart and soul and strength, for he believed  
 Himself achieving all to be achieved  
 By singer—in such songs you find alone  
 Completeness, judge the song and singer One  
 And either's purpose answered, his in it  
 Or its in him : while from true works (to wit  
 Sordello's dream-performances that will  
 Be never more than dream) escapes there still  
 Some proof the singer's proper life's beneath  
 The life his song exhibits, this a sheath  
 To that ; a passion and a knowledge far  
 Transcending these, majestic as they are,  
 Smoulder ; his lay was but an episode  
 In the bard's life. Which evidence you owed  
 To some slight weariness, a looking-off  
 Or start away, the child's skit or scoff  
 In " Charlemagne," for instance, dreamed divine  
 In every point except one restive line  
 Those daughters !—what significance may lurk  
 In that ? My life commenced before that work,  
 Continues after it, as on I fare  
 With no more stopping possibly, no care  
 To jot down (says the bard) the why and how  
 And where and when of life, as I do now :  
 But shall I cease to live for that ? Alas  
 For you ! who sigh, when shall it come to pass  
 We read that story, when will he compress  
 The future years, his whole life's business,  
 Into another lay which that one flout,  
 Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out  
 Engrosses him already while professed  
 To meditate with us eternal rest ?  
 Strike sail, slip cable ! here the galley's moored  
 For once, the awning's stretched, the poles assured ;  
 Noontide above ; except the wave's crisp dash,  
 Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,  
 The margin's silent ; out with every spoil  
 Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,  
 This serpent of a river to his head  
 I' the midst ! Admire each treasure as we spread  
 The turf to help us tell our history  
 Aright : give ear then, gentles, and descry  
 The groves of giant rushes how they grew  
 Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,  
 What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent  
 Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went

Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest  
 The springing of a land-wind from the West !  
 Wherefore ? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day :  
 To-morrow, and the pageant's moved away  
 Down to the poorest tent-pole : we and you  
 Part company : no other may pursue  
 Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate  
 Intends, if triumph or decline await  
 The tempter of the everlasting steppe.

I sung this on an empty palace-step  
 At Venice : why should I break off, nor sit  
 Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit  
 England gave birth to ? Who's adorable  
 Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will  
 Alack !—be queen to me ? That Bassanese  
 Busied among her smoking fruit-boats ? These  
 Perhaps from our delicious Asolo  
 Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico  
 Not prettier, bind late lilies into sheaves  
 To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves  
 Soiled by their own loose gold-meal ? Ah, beneath  
 The cool arch stoops she, brownest-check ! Her wreath  
 Endures a month—a half-month—if I make  
 A queen of her, continue for her sake  
 Sordello's story ? Nay, that Paduan girl  
 Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl  
 In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed  
 Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed  
 Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post  
 For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost  
 That pluck at me and point, are you advised  
 I breathe ? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised  
 —Jewels in the locks that love no crownnet like  
 Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike,  
 So fair !—Who left this end of June's turmoil,  
 Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,  
 Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free  
 Came join the peasants o'er the kissing sea.)  
 Look they too happy, too tricked out ? Confess  
 You have so niggard stock of happiness  
 To share that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,  
 One labours ineffectually stretch  
 It o'er you so that mother, children, both  
 May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth !  
 No : tear the robe yet farther : be content  
 With seeing some few score pre-eminent  
 Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,



Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights—  
 (At home we dizen scholars, chiefs and kings,  
 But in this magic weather hardly clings  
 The old garb gracefully: Venice a type  
 Of Life, 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,  
 As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought:  
 'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you sought  
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone  
 Or stay me thridd her cross canals alone,  
 As hinder Life what seems the single good  
 Sole purpose, one thing to be understood  
 Of Life)—best, be they Peasants, be they Queens,  
 Take them, I say made happy any means,  
 Parade them for the common credit, vouch  
 A luckless residue we send to crouch  
 In corners out of sight was just as framed  
 For happiness, its portion might have claimed  
 And so, could we concede, that portion, stalked  
 Fastuous as any—such my project, baulked  
 Already; hardly venture I adjust  
 A lappet when I find you! To mistrust  
 Me! nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,  
 Have the true knack of tiring suitors out  
 With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes  
 Inveterately tear-shot—there, be wise  
 Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant  
 You insult! Shall your friend (not slave) be shent  
 For speaking home? Beside care-bit erased  
 Broken-up beauties ever took my taste  
 Supremely, and I love you more, far more  
 That her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor—  
 Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where  
 A whisper came, Seek others, since thy care  
 Is found, thy life's provision; if a race  
 Should be thy mistress, and into one face  
 The many faces crowd? Ah, had I, judge,  
 Or no, your secret? Rough apparel—grudge  
 All ornaments save tag or tassel worn  
 To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn—  
 Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go  
 Alone (that's saddest but it must be so)  
 Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,  
 Aught desultory or undignified,  
 And, ravishingest lady, will you pass  
 Or not each formidable group, the mass  
 Before the Basilike (that feast gone by,  
 God's day, the great June Corpus Domini)  
 And wistfully foregoing proper men,

Come timid up to me for alms? And then  
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do  
 Some unexampled grace, when whom but you  
 Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear  
 Me out before you say it is to sneer  
 I call you ravishing, for I regret  
 Little that she, whose early foot was set  
 Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,  
 Now i' the silent city, seems to fall  
 Towards me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest  
 To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed  
 Dry of their tears upon my bosom: strange  
 Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,  
 My love! warped men, souls, bodies! yet God spoke  
 Of right-hand foot and eye—selects our yoke,  
 Sordello! as your poetship may find:  
 So sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind  
 Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate  
 The matter; ask moreover, when they prate  
 Of evil men past hope, don't each contrive  
 Despite the evil you abuse to live?  
 Keeping, each losel, thro' a maze of lies,  
 His own conceit of truth? to which he hies  
 By obscure tortuous windings, if you will,  
 But to himself not inaccessible;  
 He sees it, and his lies are for the crowd  
 Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed  
 His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch  
 One pleasure from the multitude of such  
 Denied him: then assert, all men appear  
 To think all better than themselves, by here  
 Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really, say,  
 All men think all men stupider than they  
 Since save themselves no other comprehends  
 The complicated scheme to make amends  
 —Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance  
 Good labours to exist. A slight advance  
 Merely to find the sickness you die through  
 And nought beside: but if one can't eschew  
 One's portion in the common lot, at least  
 One can avoid an ignorance increased  
 Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint  
 How nought is like dispensing without stint  
 The water of life—so easy to dispense  
 Beside, when one has probed the centre whence  
 Commotion's born—could tell you of it all  
 —Meantime, just meditate my madrigal  
 O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!

What, dullard ? we and you in smothery chafe  
 Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin  
 The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,  
 A hungry siff above us, sands among  
 Our throats, each dromedary lolls a tongue,  
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,  
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap  
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,  
 Remark, you wonder any one needs choke  
 With founts about ! Potsherd him. Gibeonites,  
 While awkwardly enough your Moses smites  
 The rock though he forego his Promised Land,  
 Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and  
 Dance, forsooth, Metaphysic Poet . . . ah  
 Mark ye the dim first oozings ? Meribah !  
 And quaffing at the fount my courage gained  
 Recall—not that I prompt ye—who explained . . .  
 Presumptuous ! interrupts one. You not I  
 'Tis Brother, marvel at and magnify  
 Mine office : office, quotha ? can we get  
 To the beginning of the office yet ?  
 What do we here ? simply experiment  
 Each on the other's power and its intent  
 When elsewhere tasked, if this of mine were trucked  
 For Thine to either's profit,—watch construct,  
 In short, an engine : with a finished one  
 What it can do is all, nought how 'tis done ;  
 But this of ours yet in probation, dusk  
 A kernel of strange wheelwork thro' its husk  
 Grows into shape by quarters and by halves ;  
 Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's  
 Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,  
 Make out each other more or less precise—  
 The scope of the whole engine's to be proved—  
 We die : which means to say the whole's removed  
 Dismounted wheel by wheel that complex gin  
 To be set up anew elsewhere, begin  
 A task indeed but with a clearer clime  
 Than the murk lodgment of our building-time :  
 And then, I grant you, it behoves forget  
 How 'tis done—all that must amuse us yet  
 So long : and while thou turn'st on thy heel  
 Pray that I be not busy slitting steel  
 Or shredding brass upon a virgin shore  
 Under a cluster of fresh stars, before  
 I name a tithe the wheels I trust to do !  
 So occupied, then, are we : hitherto,  
 At present, and a weary while to come,

The office of ourselves nor blind nor dumb  
 And seeing somewhat of man's state, has been,  
 The worst of us, to say they so have seen;  
 The better, what it was they saw; the best,  
 Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:  
 So that a glance, says such an one, around,  
 And there's no face but I can read profound  
 Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that—fear,  
 And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here!  
 Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts  
 O'erarch, will blind thee! said I not? she shuts  
 Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet!  
 Thus, prisoned in the Pionbi, I repeat  
 Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,  
 Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore  
 Thy sweet shape, Elys! therefore stoop—

That's truth!

(Applaud you) the incarcerated youth  
 Would say that!

Youth? Plara the bard? set down  
 That Plara spent his youth in a grim town  
 Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about  
 The minster for protection, never out  
 Of its black belfry's shadow or bells' roar:  
 Brighter the sun illumed the suburbs, more  
 Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof  
 For any chance escape of joy some roof  
 Taller than they allowed the rest detect  
 Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect  
 Who could, 'twas meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's  
 Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped both peaks  
 Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,  
 Then sank, a huge flame on its socket's edge,  
 Whose leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane  
 Were ghastly some few minutes more: no rain—  
 The Minster minded that! in heaps the dust  
 Lay every where: that town, the Minster's trust,  
 Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail  
 In twice twelve sonnets, Naddo Tempe's vale.

Exact the town, the minster and the street!

As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:  
 Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er  
 And sad: but Lucio's sad: I said before  
 Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be  
 As gay his love has leave to hope, as he  
 Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe:  
 'Tis of the mood itself I speak, what tinge  
 Determines it. else colourless, or mirth,

Or melancholy, as from Heaven or Earth.

Ay, that's the variation's gist! Indeed?  
 Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!  
 And having seen too what I saw, be bold  
 Enough encounter what I do behold  
 (That's sure) but you must take on trust! Attack  
 The use and purpose of such sights! Alack,  
 Not so unwisely hastes the crowd dispense  
 On Salinguerras praise in preference  
 To the Sordellos: men of action these!  
 Who seeing just as little as you please  
 Yet turn that little to account; engage  
 With, do not gaze at; carry on a stage  
 The work o' the world, not merely make report  
 The work existed ere their time—In short,  
 When at some future no-time a brave band  
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand  
 In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where's the hurt  
 Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert  
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast  
 As though Heaven's bounteous windows were slammed fast  
 Incontinent? whereas all you beneath  
 Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their teeth  
 Who ply the pullies for neglecting you:  
 And therefore have I moulded, made anew  
 A Man, delivered to be turned and tried,  
 Be angry with or pleased at. On your side  
 Have ye times, places, actors of your own?  
 Try them upon Sordello once full-grown,  
 And then—ah then! If Hercules first parched  
 His foot in Egypt only to be marched  
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,  
 What chance have I? The demigod was mute  
 Till at the altar, where time out of mind  
 Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined  
 His forehead long enough, and he began  
 Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man—  
 Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom  
 No Hercules shall make his hecatomb  
 Believe, none from his brows your chaplet rend—  
 That's your kind suffrage, yours, yes, yours, my friend  
 Whose great verse blares unintermittent on  
 Like any trumpeter at Marathon,  
 He'll testify who when Plataæas grew scant  
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant!  
 And well too, I acknowledged, as it loomed  
 Over the Midland sea that morn, presumed  
 All day, demolished by the blazing West

At eve, while towards it, tilting cloudlets prest  
 Like Persian ships for Salamis. Friend, wear  
 A crest proud as desert while I declare  
 Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring,  
 A tear its colour from that painted king  
 To lose, I would, for that one smile which went  
 To my heart, fling it in the sea content  
 Wearing your verse in place, an amulet  
 Sovereign against low-thoughtedness and fret !  
 My English Eyebright, if you are not glad  
 That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad  
 Disheveled form wherein I put mankind  
 To come at times and keep my pact in mind  
 Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge  
 Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge  
 At home, and may the summer showers gush  
 Without a warning from the missel thrush !  
 For, Eyebright, what I sing's the fate of such  
 As find our common nature (overmuch  
 Despised because restricted and unfit  
 To bear the burthen they impose on it)  
 Cling when they would discard it ; craving strength  
 To leap from the allotted world, at length  
 'Tis left—they floundering without a term  
 Each a God's germ, but doomed remain a germ  
 In unexpanded infancy, assure  
 Yourself, nor misconceive my portraiture  
 Nor undervalue its adornments quaint !  
 What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint :  
 Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,  
 Then say if you condemn me or acquit.  
 John the Beloved, banished Antioch  
 For Patmos, bade collectively his flock  
 Farewell but set apart the closing eve  
 To comfort some his exile most would grieve  
 He knew : a touching spectacle, that house  
 In motion to receive him ! Xanthus' spouse  
 You missed, made panther's meat a month since ; but  
 Xanthus himself (for 'twas his nephew shut  
 'Twixt boards and sawn asunder) Polycarp,  
 Soft Charicle next year no wheel could warp  
 To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest  
 Were ranged ; thro' whom the grey disciple prest  
 Busily blessing right and left, just stopt  
 To pat one infant's curls the hangman cropt  
 Soon after, reached the portal ; on its hinge  
 The door turns and he enters—what deep twinge  
 Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix

Whereon? How like some spectral candlestick's  
Branch the disciple's arms! Dead swooned he, woke  
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp heart-broke  
Get thee behind me Satan! have I toiled  
To no more purpose? is the gospel foiled  
Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,  
Pourtrayed with sooty garb and features swarth—  
Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled  
To see the—the—the Devil domiciled?  
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, Father, 'tis yourself  
Installed, a linning which our utmost pelf  
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss,  
And that's no twy-prong but a pastoral cross  
You're painted with! The puckered brows unfold—  
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

---

BOOK THE FOURTH.

---

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;  
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace  
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms  
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms  
They tugged for—one discovering to twist  
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist  
Secured a point of vantage—one, how best  
He'd parry that by planting in her breast  
His elbow-spike—both parties too intent  
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,  
Its conqueror would have a corpse to kiss.  
May Boniface be duly damned for this !  
Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,  
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned  
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth :  
A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra seethe  
In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself  
Be there to laugh at him ! moaned some young Guelf  
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast  
To the charred lintel of the doorway last  
His father stood within to bid him speed.  
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed  
—Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plan  
The stranger none of its inhabitants  
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,  
And ask the purpose of a sumptuous train  
Admitted on a morning ; every town  
Of the East League was come by envoy down  
To treat for Richard's ransom : here you saw  
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw  
The Paduan carroch, its vermillion cross  
On its white field : a-tiptoe o'er the fosse  
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully  
After the flock of steeples he might spy  
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago  
To mend the ramparts—sure the laggards know



The Pope's as good as here! They paced the streets  
 More soberly. At last, Taurello greets  
 The League, announced a pursuivant,—will match  
 Its courtesy, and labours to despatch  
 At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent  
 On pressing matters from his post at Trent  
 With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits  
 Their going to receive the delegates.  
 Tito! Our delegates exchanged a glance,  
 And, keeping the main way, admired askance  
 The lazy engines of outlandish birth  
 Couched like a king each on its bank of earth—  
 Arbalist, manganel and catapult;  
 While stationed by, as waiting a result,  
 Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased  
 Working to watch the strangers—this, at least,  
 Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay  
 The League's decision! Get our friend away  
 And profit for the future: how else teach  
 Azzo 'tis not so safe within claw's reach  
 Till Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?  
 Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone  
 —Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare?  
 The carrochs halted in the public square.  
 Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,  
 Men prattled, freelier than the crested gaunt  
 White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak  
 Was missing; whosoever chose might speak  
*Ecelin* boldly out: so, *Ecelin*  
 Needed his wife to swallow half the sin  
 And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp  
 He styles his son dwindles away, no help  
 From conserves, your fine triple-curdled froth  
 Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth—  
 Eh? Jubilate! Tush! no little word  
 You utter here that's not distinctly heard  
 At Oliero: he was absent sick  
 When we besieged Bassano—who i' the thick  
 O' the work perceived the progress Azzo made  
 Like *Ecelin*? through his witch *Adelaide*  
 Who managed it so well that night by night  
 At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite  
 First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,  
 And when he came with eyes filmed as in swoond  
 They knew the place was taken—Ominous  
 Your Ghibellins should get what cautelous  
 Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench  
 Vainly; St. George contrived his town a trench

O' the marshes, an impermeable bar :  
 Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar  
 Of Padua rather ; veins embrace upon  
 His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion . . .  
 What now ? The founts ! God's bread, touch not a plank !  
 A yawling hell of carrion—every tank  
 Choke-full ! found out just now to Cino's cost—  
 The same who gave Taurello's side for lost,  
 And, making no account of fortune's freaks,  
 Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks  
 Back now with Concorezzi—'faith ! they drag  
 Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag  
 On his own Palace so adroitly razed  
 He knew it not ; a sort of Guelf folk gazed  
 And laughed apart ; Cino disliked their air—  
 Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care—  
 Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin  
 To hum, *za za, Cavalier Ecelin*—  
 A silence ; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,  
 Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,  
 At last, *za za*, and up with a fierce kick  
 Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick  
 Grey hair about his spur !

Which means, they lift

The covering Taurello made a shift  
 To stretch upon the truth ; as well avoid  
 Further disclosures ; leave them thus employed.  
 Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,  
 And poor Ferrara puts a softened face  
 On her misfortunes, save one spot—this tall  
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall  
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort  
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short,  
 (Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,  
 The fig-tree reared itself,) but stark and cramped,  
 Made fools of ; whence upon the very edge,  
 Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge  
 Of shade, are shrubs inserted, warp and woof,  
 Which smother up that variance. Scale the roof  
 Of solid tops and o'er the slope you slide  
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,  
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees  
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,  
 Set by itself ; and in the centre spreads,  
 Born upon three uneasy leopards' heads,  
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt  
 Of water bubbles in : the walls begirt  
 With trees leave off on either hand : pursue

Your path along a wondrous avenue  
 Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,  
 With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown  
 From many a Moorish summer ; how they wind  
 Out of the fissures ! likelier to bind  
 The building than those rusted cramps which drop  
 Already in the eating sunshine. Stop  
 Yon fleeting shapes above there ! Ah, the pride  
 Or else despair of the whole country-side—  
 A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,  
 God, goddess, woman, man, your Greek rough-rasps  
 In crumbling Naples marble ! meant to look  
 Like those Messina marbles Constance took  
 Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed  
 To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,  
 A certain font with caryatides  
 Since cloistered at Goito ; only, these  
 Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop  
 Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop  
 O' the instant after you their arms ! unplucked  
 By this or that you pass ; for they conduct  
 To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,  
 Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien  
 Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle  
 No doubt ; here, left a sullen breathing-while,  
 Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood  
 For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood  
 Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath  
 Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,  
 Steadied his strengths amid the buz and stir  
 Of a dusk hideous amphitheatre  
 At the announcement of his over-match  
 To wind the day's diversion up, despatch  
 Their pertinacious friend : while, limbs one heap,  
 The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap  
 Dart after dart forth as her hero's car  
 Clove dizzily the solid of the war  
 —Let coil about his knees for pride in him.  
 We reach the farthest terrace and the grim  
 San Pietro Palace stops us.

Such the state  
 Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate  
 Sicilian marvels that his girlish wife  
 Retrude still might lead her ancient life  
 In her new home—whereat enlarged so much  
 Neighbours upon the novel princely touch  
 He took who here imprisons Boniface.  
 Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace ;

And here, emerging from the labyrinth  
 Below, two minstrels pause beside the plinth  
 Of the door-pillar,

He had really left  
 Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft  
 From the morass) where Este's camp was made,  
 The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade—  
 Looked cursorily o'er, but scarce as when,  
 Eager for cause to stand aloof from men  
 At every point save the fantastic tie  
 Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,  
 He made account of such. A crowd; he meant  
 To task the whole of it; each part's intent  
 Concerned him therefore, and the more he pried  
 The less became Sordello satisfied  
 With his own figure at the moment. Sought  
 He respite from his task? desisted he aught  
 Novel in the anticipated sight  
 Of all these livers upon all delight?  
 A phalanx as of myriad points combined  
 Whereby he still had imaged that mankind  
 His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,  
 His age—in plans to show at least the thing  
 So dreamed, but now he hastened to impress  
 With his own will, effect a happiness  
 From theirs,—supply a body to his soul  
 Thence, and become eventually whole  
 With them as he had hoped to be without—  
 Made these the mankind he was mad about?  
 Because a few of them were notable  
 Must all be figured worthy note? As well  
 Expect to find Taurello's triple line  
 Of trees a single and prodigious pine.  
 Real pines rose here and there, but, close among,  
 Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng  
 Of shrubs you saw, a nameless common sort  
 O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report,  
 Fast hurried into corners, or at best  
 Admitted to be fancied like the rest.  
 Reckon that morning's proper chiefs; how few!  
 And yet the people grew, the people grew,  
 Grew ever, as with many there indeed,  
 More left behind and most who should succeed  
 Simply in virtue of their faces, eyes,  
 Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,  
 Were veritably mingled with, made great  
 Those chiefs: no overlooking Mainard's state  
 Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead

Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head  
 Of infinite and absent Tyrolese  
 Or Paduans; startling too the more that these,  
 Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,  
 Yet doubtless on the whole (quoth Eglamor)  
 Smiling—for if a wealthy man decays  
 And out of store of such must wear all days,  
 One tattered suit alike in sun and shade,  
 'Tis commonly some tarnished fine brocade  
 Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more;  
 Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store  
 Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled  
 For common wear as she goes through the world  
 The faint remainder of some worn-out smile  
 Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While  
 Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,—  
 Crowds no way interfering to discuss  
 Much less dispute life's joys with one employed  
 In envying them, or, if they enjoyed,  
 There lingered somewhat indefinable  
 In every look and tone, the mirth as well  
 As woe, that fixed at once his estimate  
 Of the result, their good or bad estate—  
 Old memories flocked but with new effect:  
 And the new body, ere he could suspect,  
 Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,  
 The new self seemed impatient to be used  
 By him, but utterly another way  
 Than that anticipated: strange to say,  
 They were too much below him, more in thrall  
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.  
 What bootied scattered brilliances?—the mind  
 Of any number he might hope to bind  
 And stamp with his own thought, howe'er august,  
 If all the rest should grovel in the dust?  
 No: first a mighty equilibrium sure  
 To be established, privilege procure  
 For them himself had long possessed! he felt  
 An error, an exceeding error melt—  
 While he was occupied with Mantuan chants  
 Behoved him think of men and of their wants  
 Such as he now distinguished every side,  
 As his own want that might be satisfied,  
 And, after that, of wondrous qualities  
 Of his own soul demanding exercise,  
 And like demand it longer, nor a claim  
 On their part, nor was virtue in the aim  
 At serving them on his, but, past retrieve,

He in their toils felt with them, nor could leave,  
 Wonder that in the eagerness to rule,  
 Impress his will upon them, he the fool  
 Had never entertained the obvious thought  
 This last of his arrangements would be fraught  
 With good to them as well, and he should be  
 Rejoiced thereat ; and if, as formerly,  
 He sighed the merry time of life must fleet,  
 'Twas deeper now, for could the crowds repeat  
 Their poor experiences ? His hand that shook  
 Was twice to be deplored. The Legate, look !  
 With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,  
 Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,  
 Large tongue, moist open mouth ; and this long while  
 That owner of the iâiotic smile  
 Serves them ! He fortunately saw in time  
 His fault however, and the office prime  
 Includes the secondary—best accept  
 Both offices ; Taurello its adept  
 Could teach him the preparatory one,  
 And how to do what he had fancied done  
 Long previously, ere take the greater task.  
 How render then these people happy ? ask  
 The people's friends : for there must be one good,  
 One way to it—the Cause ! he understood  
 The meaning now of Palma ; else why are  
 The great ado, the trouble wide and far,  
 These Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope  
 Or its despair ! 'twixt Emperor or Pope  
 The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—  
 Of hardihood recurring still to fail—  
 That foreign interloping fiend, this free  
 And native overbrooding Deity—  
 Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms  
 His presence ruined troubling through the calms  
 Of Paradise—or, on the other hand,  
 The Pontiff, as your Kaisers understand,  
 That, snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,  
 With lulling eye breaks in the noon profound  
 Some saving tree—who but the Kaiser drest  
 As the dislodging angel of the pest  
 Then yet that pest bedropt, flat head, full fold,  
 With coruscating dower of dyes ; behold  
 The secret, so to speak, and master-spring  
 Of the whole contest ! which of them shall bring  
 Men good—perchance the most good—ay, it may  
 Be that ; the question is which knows the way.  
 And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past

Out of San Pietro ; never looked the last  
 Of archers, slingers ; and our friend began  
 To recollect strange modes of serving man—  
 Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,  
 And more : this way of theirs may, who can tell,  
 Need perfecting, said he : all's better solved  
 At once : Taurello 'twas the task devolved  
 On late—confront Taurello !

And at last

They did confront him. Scarcely an hour past  
 When forth Sordello came, older by years  
 Than at his entry. Unexampled fears  
 Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute  
 And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,  
 Into Ferrara—not the empty town  
 That morning witnessed : he went up and down  
 Streets whence the veil was stripped shred after shred,  
 So that in place of huddling with their dead  
 Indoors to answer Salinguerra's ends,  
 Its folk make shift to crawl and sit like friends  
 With any one. A woman gave him choice  
 Of her two daughters, the infantile voice  
 Or dimpled knee, for half a chain his throat  
 Was clasped with ; but an archer knew the coat—  
 Its blue cross and eight lilies, bade beware  
 One dogging him in concert with the pair  
 Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.  
 Night set in early, autumn dew's fell rife,  
 And fires were kindled while the Leaguers' mass  
 Began at every carroch—he must pass  
 Between that kneeling people : presently  
 The carroch of Verona caught his eye  
 With purple trappings ; silently he bent  
 Over its fire, when voices violent  
 Began, Affirm not whom the youth was like  
 That, striking from the porch, I did not strike  
 Again ; I too have chesnut hair ; my kin  
 Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin ;  
 Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away ; sing ; take  
 My glove for guerdon ! and for that man's sake  
 He turned : A song of Eglamor's ! scarce named,  
 When, Our Sordello's rather ! all exclaimed ;  
 Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme ?  
 He had been happy to deny, this time ;  
 Profess as heretofore the aching head,  
 The failing heart ; suspect that in his stead  
 Some true Apollo had the charge of them,  
 Was champion to reward or to condemn

So his intolerable risk might shift  
 Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift  
 Of gifts returned, be certain! at the close—  
 I made that, said he to a youth who rose  
 As if to hear: 'twas Palma through the band  
 Conducted him in silence by the hand.

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent  
 Gave place, remember, to the pair; who went  
 In turn at Montelungo's visit—one  
 After the other are they come and gone.  
 A drear vast presence-chamber roughly set  
 In order for this morning's use; you met  
 The grim black twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked  
 With ochre on the naked wall, nor lacked  
 There green and yellow tokens either side;  
 But the new symbol Tito brought had tried  
 The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma knew  
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do  
 Until the sight of her restored his lip  
 A certain half-smile three months' chieftainship  
 Had banished! Afterward the Legate found  
 No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound  
 And unwound carelessly! Now sate the Chief  
 Silent as when our couple left whose brief  
 Encounter wrought so opportune effect  
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject—  
 Though time if ever, 'twas to pause now—fix  
 On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks  
 Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,  
 Just managed to be hindered crashing down—  
 His last sound troops ranged—care observed to post  
 His last of the maimed soldiers innermost—  
 So much was plain enough, but somehow struck  
 Him not before: and now with this strange luck  
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address  
 So well, what thought he of? How the success  
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush  
 Ecelin's fiercest scruples up, or flush  
 Young Ecelin's white cheek. or, last, exempt  
 Himself from telling what there was to tempt;  
 No: that this minstrel was Romano's last  
 Servant—himself the first! Could he contrast  
 The whole! that minstrel's thirty autumns spent  
 In doing nought, his notablest event  
 This morning's journey hither, as we told—  
 Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,  
 A stammering awkward youth (scarce dared he raise  
 His eye before that magisterial gaze)



—And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes  
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,  
 Cares and contrivances, yet you would say  
 A youth 'twas nonchalantly looked away  
 Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick  
 Expostulating trees—so agile quick  
 And graceful turned the head on the broad chest  
 Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,  
 Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire  
 Across the room ; and, loosened of its tire  
 Of steel, that head let see the comely brown  
 Large massive locks discoloured as a crown  
 Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where  
 A sharp white line divided clean the hair ;  
 Glossy above, glossy below, it swept  
 Curling and fine about a brow thus kept  
 Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound :  
 This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,  
 Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,  
 No lion more ; two vivid eyes, enchased  
 In hollows filled with many a shade and streak  
 Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek ;  
 Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed  
 A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed,  
 Unwidened, less or more ; indifferent  
 Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent—  
 Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train  
 As now : a period was fulfilled again ;  
 Such in a series made his life, compressed  
 In each, one story serving for the rest—  
 Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds  
 Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,  
 Procured him an occasion That above,  
 That eagle, testified he could improve  
 Effectually ; the Kaiser's symbol lay  
 Beside his rescript, a new badge by way  
 Of baldric ; while another thing that marred  
 Alike emprise, achievement and reward,  
 Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.  
 What a past life those flying thoughts pursue !  
 As his no name in Mantua half so old ;  
 But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled  
 It latterly, the Adelardi spared  
 Few means to rival them : both factions shared  
 Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould yield  
 A product very like the city's shield,  
 Half black and white, or Ghibelin and Guelf,  
 As after Salinguerra styled himself

And Este who, till Marchesalla's died  
 —Last of the Adelardi, never tried  
 His fortune there; but Marchesalla's child  
 Transmits (can Blacks and Whites be reconciled  
 And young Taurello wed Linguetta) wealth  
 And sway to a sole grasp: each treats by stealth  
 Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese  
 Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize  
 Linguetta, and are gone! Our first dismay  
 Abated somewhat, hurries down to lay  
 The after indignation Boniface,  
 No meaner spokesman: Learn the full disgrace  
 Averted ere you blame us—wont to rate  
 Your Salinguerra, and sole potentate  
 That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors—  
 Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors  
 Our step—but we were zealous. Azzo's then  
 To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:  
 The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere  
 With Italy to build in, builds he here?  
 This deemed—the other owned upon advice—  
 A third reflected on the matter twice—  
 In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends  
 Talked of the townsmen making him amends,  
 Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was  
 Rare sport, one morning, over the morass  
 A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,  
 Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again  
 In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;  
 Count Boniface rode smirking at his side;  
 There's half Ferrara with her, whispers flew,  
 And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!

Anon the stripling was in Sicily  
 Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he  
 Was gracious nor his guest incapable;  
 Each understood the other. So it fell,  
 One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,  
 Had near forgotten what precise degrees  
 He crept by into such a downy seat,  
 Over the Count trudged in a special heat  
 To bid him of God's love dislodge from each  
 Of Salinguerra's Palaces; a breach  
 Might yawn else not so readily to shut,  
 For who was just arrived at Mantua but  
 The youngster, sword on thigh, tuft upon chin,  
 With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,  
 Pistore and the like! Next news: no whit  
 Do any of Ferrara's domes befit

His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a band  
Of foreigners assemble, understand  
Garden-constructing, level and surround,  
Build up and bury in. A last news crowned  
The consternation : since his infant's birth  
He only waits they end his wondrous girth  
Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà  
To visit us. When, as its Podestà  
Regaled him at Vicenza, Este, there  
With Boniface beforehand, each aware  
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled  
A party which abetted him, but yelled  
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,  
And how Taurello, occupied that night  
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, were told :  
—Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,  
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst  
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first—  
But afterward you heard not constantly  
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be !  
Though Azzo simply gained by the event  
A shifting of his plagues—this one content  
To fall behind the other and estrange,  
You will not say, his nature, but so change  
That in Romano sought he wife and child,  
And for Romano's sake was reconciled  
To losing individual life, deep sunk,  
A very pollard mortised in a trunk  
Which Arabs out of wantonness contrive  
Shall dwindle that the alien stock may thrive  
Till forth that vine-palm feathers to the root,  
And red drops moisten them its arid fruit.  
Once set on Adelaide, the subtle mate  
And wholly at his beck, to emulate  
The Church's valiant women deed for deed,  
To paragon her namesake, win the meed  
Of its Matilda, and they overbore  
The rest of Lombardy—not as before  
By an instinctive truculence, but patched  
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched  
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means:  
Only, Romano Salinguerra screens.  
Heinrich was somewhat of the tardiest  
To comprehend, nor Philip acquiesced  
At once in the arrangement ; reasoned, plied  
His friend with offers of another bride,  
A statelier function—fruitlessly ; 'tis plain  
Taurello's somehow one to let remain

Obscure, and Otho, free to judge of both,  
 —Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,  
 And this more plausible and facile wight  
 With every point a-sparkle—chose the right,  
 Admiring how his predecessors harped  
 On the wrong man : thus, quoth he, wits are warped  
 By Outsides ! Carelessly, withal, his life  
 Suffered its many turns of peace and strife  
 In many lands—you hardly could surprise  
 A man who shamed Sordello (recognise)  
 In this as much beside, that, unconcerned,  
 What qualities are natural or earned,  
 With no ideal of graces ; as they came  
 He took them, singularly well the same—  
 Speaking a dozen languages, because  
 Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws  
 In contracts ; while, through Arab lore, deter  
 Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,  
 From Friedrich's path ! Friedrich, whose pilgrimago  
 The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage  
 To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,  
 And see Bassano for St. Francis' church  
 —Profound on Guido the Bolognian's piece  
 That, if you lend him credit, rivals Greece—  
 Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits  
 Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits  
 In Paininrie. He strung the angelot ;  
 Made rhymes thereto ; for prowess, clove he not  
 Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper ? why  
 Detail you thus a varied mastery  
 But that Taurello, ever on the watch  
 For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch  
 Their capabilities and purposes,  
 Displayed himself so far as displayed these :  
 While our Sordello only cared to know  
 About men as a means for him to show  
 Himself, and men were much or little worth  
 According as they kept in or drew forth  
 That self ; the other's choicest instruments  
 Surmised him shallow. Meantime malcontents  
 Dropped off, town after town grew wiser ; how  
 Change the world's face ? said people ; as 'tis now  
 It has been, will be ever : very fine  
 Subjecting things profane to things divine  
 In talk : this contumacy will fatigue  
 The vigilance of Este and the League,  
 Observe ! accordingly, their basement sapped,  
 Azzo and Boniface were soon entrapped

By Ponte Alto, and in one month's space  
Slept at Verona : either left a brace  
Of sons—so three years after, either's pair  
Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir :  
Azzo remained and Richard—all the stay  
Of Este and St. Boniface, at bay  
As 'twere ; when either Ecelin grew old  
Or his brain altered—not the proper mould  
For new appliances—his old palm stock  
Endured no influx of strange strengths : he'd rock  
As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low  
As proud of the completeness of his woe,  
Then weep—real tears ! Now make some mad onslaught  
On Este, heedless of the lesson taught  
So painfully—now cringe, sue peace, but peace  
At price of all advantage ; therefore cease  
The fortunes of Romano ! Up at last  
Rose Este and Romano sank as fast.  
And men remarked this sort of peace and war  
Commenced while Salinguerra was afar :  
And every friend besought him, but in vain,  
To wait his old adherent, call again,  
Taurello : not he !—who had daughters, sons,  
Could plot himself, nor needed any one's  
Advice. 'Twas Adelaide's remaining staunch  
Prevented his destruction root and branch  
Forthwith ; Goito grew green above her, gay  
He made alliances, gave lands away  
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew  
For ever from the world. Taurello, who  
Was summoned to the convent, then refused  
A word—however patient, thus abused,  
At Este's mercy through his imbecile  
Ally, was fain dismiss the foolish smile,  
And a few movements of the happier sort  
Changed matters, put himself in men's report  
As heretofore ; he had to fight, beside,  
And that became him ever. So in pride  
And flushing of this kind of second youth  
He dealt a good-will blow : Este in truth  
Was prone—and men remembered, somewhat late,  
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate  
He bore that Este—how it would outbreak  
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake  
In sunny weather—as that noted day  
When with his hundred friends he offered slay  
Azzo before the Kaiser's face ; and how  
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow

A liegeman's challenge straight he too was calmed :  
 His hate, no doubt, would bear to lie embalmed,  
 Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, to survive  
 All intermediate crumblings, be aliye  
 At earth's catastrophe—'twas Este's crash  
 Not Azzo's he demanded, so no rash  
 Procedure ! Este's true antagonist  
 Rose out of Ecelin : all voices whist,  
 All eyes were sharpened, wit predicted. He  
 'Twas leaned in the embrasure presently,  
 Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace  
 With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face  
 I' the dust : and as the trees waved sere, his smile  
 Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.

Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer ?  
 That we should stick together all the year  
 I kept Vicenza !—How old Boniface,  
 Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,  
 He by that pillar, I this pillar, each  
 In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,  
 Egging our rabble on to disavow  
 Allegiance to the Marquis—Bacchus, how  
 They caught us ! Ecelin must turn their drudge ;  
 Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge  
 Paying arrears of tribute due long since—  
 Bacchus ! My man, could promise then, nor wince,  
 The bones-and-muscles ! sound of wind and limb,  
 Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him ;  
 And now he sits me, slaving and mute,  
 Intent on chafing each starved purple foot  
 Benumbed past aching with the altar slab—  
 Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab  
 Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps  
 Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps  
 —Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet ?  
 Sworn to abjure the world and the world's fret,  
 God's own now ? drop the dormitory bar,  
 Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular  
 Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out—  
 So ! but the midnight whisper turns a shout,  
 Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate  
 In the stone walls : the past, the world you hate  
 Is with you, ambush, open field—or see  
 The surging flame—they fire Vicenza—glée !  
 Follow, let Pilio and Bernardi chafe—  
 Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio—safe !  
 Ah, the mad people waken ? Ah, they writhe  
 And reach you ? if they block the gate—no tithe

Can pass—keep back you Bassanese! the edge,  
 Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge,  
 Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!  
 Hell—are they sprinkling fire too? the blood fries  
 And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear  
 Those upturned faces choaking with despair.  
 Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate—how now?  
 You six had charge of her? And then the vow  
 Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's plucked, till one shriek  
 (I hear it) and you fling—you cannot speak—  
 Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled  
 The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled  
 This morn, naked across the fire: how crown  
 The archer that exhausted lays you down  
 Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?  
 While one, while mine . . .

Bacchus! I think there lies  
 More than one corpse there (and he paced the room)  
 —Another cinder somewhere—'twas my doom  
 Beside, my doom: if Adelaide is dead  
 I am the same, this Azzo lives instead  
 Of that to me, and we pull any how  
 Este into a heap—the matter's now  
 At the true juncture slipping us so oft;  
 Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed  
 His crown at such a juncture: let but hold  
 Our Friedrich's purpose, let this chain enfold  
 The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin?  
 That must recoil when the best days begin—  
 Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler leaves  
 His name for me to fight with, no one grieves!  
 But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock  
 His cloister to become my stumbling-block  
 Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 'tis again—  
 The land's inevitable Head—explain  
 The reverences that subject us! Count  
 These Ecelins now! not to say as fount,  
 Originating power of thought, from twelve  
 That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve  
 Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine  
 Somehow with something! Ecelin's a fine  
 Clear name! 'Twere simpler, doubtless, twine with me  
 At once: our cloistered friend's capacity  
 Was of a sort! I had to share myself  
 In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf  
 That's forced illume in fifty points the vast  
 Rare vapour he's environed by: at last  
 My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge

And crown—no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge  
The man be crowned!

That aloe, an he durst,  
Would climb! just such a bloated sprawler first  
I noted in Messina's castle court  
The day I came, and Heinrich asked in sport  
If I would pledge my faith to win him back  
His right in Lombardy; for, once bid pack  
Marauders, he continued, in my stead  
You rule, Taurello! and upon this head  
Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her  
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,  
Retrude following!

I am absolved  
From further toil: the empery devolved  
On me, 'twas Tito's word: and think, to lay  
For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,  
Prompt nobody, and render an account  
Taurello to Taurello! nay, I mount  
To Friedrich—he conceives the post I kept,  
Who did true service, able or inept,  
Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I:  
Me guerdoned, counsel fellows; would he vie  
With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface  
Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race  
Must break ere govern Lombardy; I point  
How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint,  
The socket from the bone; my Azzo's stare  
Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,  
Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end  
To serve? There's left me twenty years to spend  
—How better than my old way? Had I one  
Who laboured overthrow my work—a son  
Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,  
To root my pines up and then poison me,  
Suppose—'twere worth while frustrate that! Beside  
Another life's ordained me: the world's tide  
Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press  
Of waves, a single wave through weariness  
That's gently led aside, laid upon shore?  
My life must be lived out in foam and roar,  
No question. Fifty years the province held  
Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,  
He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,  
Those trees a year or two, then, not a trace  
Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues  
Like that Sordello with the foolish songs—  
To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?



—Flowers one may tease, that never seem extinct ;  
 Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where  
 I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,  
 To overawe the aloes—and we trod  
 Those flowers, how call you such ? into the sod ;  
 A stately foreigner—and worlds of pain  
 To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain !  
 It would decline—these would not be destroyed—  
 And now, where is it ? where can you avoid  
 The flowers ? I frighten children twenty years  
 Longer !—which way, too, Ecelin appears  
 To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth  
 Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth,  
 They prattle, at Vicenza ! Fate, fate, fate,  
 My fine Taurello ! go you, promulgate  
 Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandise  
 Young Ecelin—our Prefect's badge ! a prize  
 Too precious, certainly.

How now ? Compete  
 With my old comrade ? shuffle from their seat  
 His children ? Paltry dealing ! don't I know  
 Ecelin ? now, I think, and years ago !  
 What's changed—the weakness ? did not I compound  
 For that, and undertake preserve him sound  
 Despite it ? Say Taurello's hankering  
 After the boy's preferment—this play-thing  
 To carry, Bacchus ! And he laughed.

Remark  
 Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark  
 Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort  
 Fails : while these last are ever stopping short—  
 (Much to be done—so little they can do !)  
 The careless tribe see nothing to pursue  
 Should they desist ; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds  
 Methodic with Taurello ; so he turned.  
 Enough amused by fancies fairly earned  
 Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,  
 And Boniface completely at his beck,  
 To his own petty but immediate doubt  
 If he could pacify the League without  
 Conceding Richard ; just to this was brought  
 That interval of vain discursive thought !  
 As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit  
 Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot,  
 Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black  
 Enormous water current, his sole track  
 To his own tribe again, where he is King ;

And laughs because he guesses, numbering  
 The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch  
 Of, the first lizard wrested from its couch  
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips  
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,  
 And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)  
 That he has reached its boundary, at last  
 May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South  
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth  
 And nails, and hair; but, these enchantments tried  
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside  
 For truth, cool projects a return with friends,  
 The likelihood of winning wild amends  
 Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort silently,  
 And, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,  
 Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon  
 Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.

Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear,  
 Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,  
 If any meagre and discoloured moon  
 Should venture forth; and such was peering soon  
 Above the harassed city—her close lanes  
 Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,  
 As though she shrunk into herself to keep  
 What little life was saved more safely. Heap  
 By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside  
 The blackest spoke Sordello and replied  
 Palma with none to listen. 'Tis your Cause—  
 What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws—  
 (Remember how my youth escaped! I trust  
 To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just  
 As any child)—laws secretly at work  
 Explaining this. Assure me good may lurk  
 Under the bad; my multitude has part  
 In your designs, their welfare is at heart  
 With Salinguerra, to their interest  
 Refer the deeds he dwelt on—so divest  
 Our conference of much that scared me: why  
 Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I  
 Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind  
 This morn, a recreant to that wide mankind  
 O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,  
 —That force denied its object? why divorce  
 These, then admire my spirit's flight the same,  
 As though it bore a burden which could tame  
 No pinion, from dead void to living space?  
 —That orb consigned to chaos and disgrace,  
 Why vaunt complacently my frantic dance,

Making a feat's facilities enhance  
 The marvel? But I front Taurello, one  
 Of happier fate, and what I should have done,  
 He does; the multitude aye paramount  
 With him, its 'making progress may account  
 For his abiding still: when—but you heard  
 His talk with Tito—the excuse preferred  
 For burning those five hostages—and broached  
 By way of blind, as you and I approached,  
 I do believe.

She spoke: then he, My thought  
 Plainer expressed! All Friedrich's profit—nought  
 Of these meantime, of conquests to achieve  
 For them, of wretchednesses to relieve  
 While profiting that Friedrich. Azzo, too,  
 Supports a cause: what is it? Guelfs pursue  
 Their ends by means like yours, or better?

When  
 The Guelfs were shown alike, men ranged with men,  
 And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze,  
 Morn broke: once more, Sordello, meet its gaze  
 Proudly—the people's charge against thee fails  
 In every point, while either party quails!  
 These are the busy ones—be silent thou!  
 Two parties take the world up, and allow  
 No third, yet have one principle, subsist  
 By the same method; whoso shall enlist  
 With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.  
 So there is one less quarrel to compose  
 'Twixt us: the Guelf's, the Ghibellin's to curse—  
 I have done nothing, but both sides do worse  
 Than nothing; nay to me, forgotten, reft  
 Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left  
 The notion of a service—ha? What lured  
 Me here, what mighty aim was I assured  
 Moved Salinguerra? What a Cause remained  
 Intact, distinct from these, and fate ordained,  
 For all the past, that Cause for me?

One pressed  
 Before them here, a watcher, to suggest  
 The subject for a ballad: He must know  
 The tale of the dead worthy, long ago  
 Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,  
 Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus  
 In the world's corners—but too late, no doubt,  
 For the brave time he sought to bring about  
 —Not know Crescentius Nomentanus? Then  
 He cast about for terms to tell him, when

Sordello disavowed it, how they used  
 Whenever their Superior introduced  
 A novice to the Brotherhood—(for I  
 Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
 Appointed too, quoth he, till Innocent  
 Bade me relinquish, to my small content,  
 My wife or my brown sleeves) out some one spoke  
 Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke  
 The edict issued after his demise  
 That blotted memory, and effigies,  
 All out except a floating power, a name  
 Including, tending to produce the same  
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least  
 Within that man, though to a vulgar priest  
 And a vile stranger, fit to be a slave  
 Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, fortune gave  
 The rule there : but Crescentius, haply drest  
 In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,  
 Taking the people at their word, forth stept  
 As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept  
 Us waiting ; stept he forth and from his brain  
 Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,  
 Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome kings styled  
 Themselves the citizens of, and, beguiled  
 Thereby, were fain select the lustrous gem  
 Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem  
 —The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch !  
 He flashes like a phanal, men too catch  
 The flame, and Rome's accomplished ; when returned  
 Otho and John the Consul's step had spurned,  
 And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress  
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress  
 Of adverse fortune bent. They crucified  
 Their Consul in the Forum and abide  
 Such slaves at Rome e'er since, that I—(for I  
 Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
 Appointed)—I had option to keep wife  
 Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife  
 Lose both. A song of Rome !

And Rome, indeed,

Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,  
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,  
 Looked an established point of light whence rays  
 Traversed the world ; and all the clustered homes  
 Beside of men were bent on being Romes  
 In their degree ; the question was how each  
 Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach  
 Herself ; nor struggled either principle

To change what it aspired possess—Rome, still  
For Friedrich or Honorius.

Rome's the Cause .

The Rome of the old Pandects, our new laws—  
The Capitol turned Castle Angelo  
And structures that inordinately glow  
Corrected by the Theatre forlorn  
As a black mundane shell, its world late born  
—Verona, that's beside it. These combined,  
We typify the scheme to put mankind  
Once more in full possession of their rights  
By his sole agency. On me it lights  
To build up Rome again—me, first and last :  
For such a Future was endured the Past !  
And thus in the grey twilight forth he sprung  
To give his thought consistency among  
The People's self, and let their truth avail  
Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

---

## BOOK THE FIFTH.

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk  
 As at the dawn? merely a perished husk  
 Now, that arose a power like to build  
 Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled  
 So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine  
 —A Rome indebted to no Palatine,  
 Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possest  
 Of thy wish now—rewarded for thy quest  
 To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons—  
 Are this and this and this the shining ones  
 Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say  
 Our favoured tenantry pursue their way  
 After a fashion! This companion slips  
 On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard trips  
 At his mooned sandal. Leave to lead the brawls  
 Here i' the atria? No, friend. He that sprawls  
 On aught but a stibadium suffers . . . goose,  
 Puttest our lustral vase to such an use?  
 Oh, huddle up the day's disasters—march  
 Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,  
 Rome!

Yet before they quite disband—a whim—  
 Study a shelter, now, for him, and him,  
 Nay, even him, to house them! any cave  
 Suffices—throw out earth. A loophole? Brave!  
 They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass  
 Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,  
 And I am dead! But here's our son excels  
 At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells  
 Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes  
 That dream into a door-post, just escapes  
 The mystery of hinges. Lie we both  
 Perdue another age. The goodly growth  
 Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,  
 But that descendant's garb suits well enough  
 A portico-contriver. Speed the years—  
 What's time to us? and lo, a city rears

Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to us?  
 So, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus  
 The head! successively sewer, forum, cirque—  
 Last age that aqueduct was counted work,  
 And now they tire the artificer upon  
 Blank alabaster, black obsidion,  
 —Careful Jove's face be duly fulgurant,  
 And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant  
 Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed  
 Above the baths. What difference betwixt  
 This Rome and ours? Resemblance what between  
 The scurvy dumb-show and the pageant sheen—  
 These Romans and our rabble? Rest thy wit  
 And listen: step by step,—a workman fit  
 With each, nor too fit,—to one's task, one's time,—  
 No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,  
 When just the substituting osier lithe  
 For bulrushes, and after, wood for witho  
 To further loam and roughcast work a stage,  
 Exacts an architect, exacts an age,—  
 Nor tables of the Mauritanian tree  
 For men whose maple log's their luxury,—  
 And Rome's accomplished! Better (say you) merge  
 At once all workmen in the demiurge,  
 All epochs in a life-time, and all tasks  
 In one: undoubtedly the city basks  
 I' the day—while those you'd feast there want the knack  
 Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,  
 Distinguish not your peacock from your swan,  
 Or Mareotic juice from Cœcuban,  
 Nay sneer . . . enough! 'twas happy to conceive  
 Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave  
 Us of that credit: for the rest, her spite  
 Is an old story—serves us very right  
 For adding yet another to the dull  
 List of devices—things proved beautiful  
 Could they be done, Sordello cannot do.

He sate upon the terrace, plucked and threw  
 The powdery aloë-cusps away, saw shift  
 Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift  
 Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,  
 Mounds of all majesty. Thou archetype,  
 Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!

And then a low voice wound into his heart:  
 Sordello (lower than a Pythoness  
 Conceding to a Lydian King's distress  
 The cause of his long error—one mistake  
 Of her past oracle) Sordello, wake!

Where is the vanity ? Why count you, one  
 The first step with the last step ? What is gone  
 Except that aëry magnificence—  
 That last step you took first ? an evidence  
 You were . . . no matter. Let those glances fall !  
 This basis, this beginning step of all,  
 Which proves you one of us, is this gone too ?  
 Pity to disconcert one versed as you  
 In fate's ill-nature, but its full extent  
 Eludes Sordello, even : the veil's rent,  
 Read the black writing—that collective man  
 Outstrips the individual ! Who began  
 The greatnesses you know ?—ay, your own art  
 Shall serve us : put the poet's mimes apart—  
 Close with the poet—closer—what ? a dim  
 Too plain form separates itself from him ?  
 Alcama's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,  
 Woven into the echoes left erewhile  
 Of Nina's, one soft web of song : no more  
 Turning his name, flower-like o'er and o'er !  
 An elder poet in the younger's place—  
 Take Nina's strength—but lose Alcama's grace ?  
 Each neutralizes each then ! gaze your fill ;  
 Search further and the past presents you still  
 New Ninas, new Alcamas, time's midnight  
 Concluding,—better say its evenlight  
 Of yesterday. You now, in this respect  
 Of benefiting people (to reject  
 The favour of your fearful ignorance  
 A thousand phantasms eager to advance,  
 Refer you but to those within your reach)  
 Were you the first who got, to use plain speech,  
 The Multitude to be materialized ?  
 That loose eternal unrest—who devised  
 An apparition i' the midst ? the rout  
 Who checked, the breathless ring who formed about  
 That sudden flower ? Get round at any risk  
 The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk  
 O' the lily ! Swords across it ! Reign thy reign  
 And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne !  
 --The very child of over-joyousness,  
 Unfeeling thence, strong therefore : Strength by stress  
 Of Strength comes of a forehead confident,  
 Two widened eyes expecting heart's content,  
 A calm as out of just-quelled noise, nor swerves  
 The ample cheek for doubt, in gracious curves  
 Abutting on the upthrust nether lip—  
 He wills, how should he doubt then ? Ages slip—



Was it Sordello pried into the work  
 So far accomplished, and discovering lurk  
 A company amid the other clans,  
 Only distinct in priests for castellans  
 And popes for Suzerains (their rule confessed  
 Its rule, their interest its interest,  
 Living for sake of living—there an end,  
 Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend  
 In making adversaries or allies);  
 Dived he into its capabilities  
 And dared create out of that sect a soul  
 Should turn the multitude, already whole,  
 To some account? Speak plainer! Is't so sure  
 God's church lives by a King's investiture?  
 Look to last step: a staggering—a shock—  
 What's sand shall be demolished, but the rock  
 Endures—a column of black fiery dust  
 Blots heaven—woe, woe, 'tis prematurely thrust  
 Aside, that step!—the air clears—nought's erased  
 Of the true outline? Thus much is firm based—  
 The other was a scaffold: see you stand  
 Buttressed upon his mattock Hildebrand  
 Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply  
 As in a forge; it buries either eye  
 White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,  
 The neck's tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,  
 As if a cloud enveloped him while fought  
 Under it all, grim prizers, thought with thought  
 At dead-lock, agonizing he, until  
 The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,  
 The slave with folded arms and drooping lids  
 They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.  
 —A root, the crippled mandrake of the earth,  
 Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,  
 Be certain; fruit of suffering's excess,  
 Whence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress  
 Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years  
 For men to wear away in smiles and tears  
 Between the two that nearly seem to touch,  
 Observe you: quit one workman and we clutch  
 Another, letting both their trains go by—  
 The actors-out of either's policy,  
 Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,  
 May carry the Imperial crowns across,  
 Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold—  
 As Alexander, Innocent uphold  
 On that the Papal keys—but, link on link,  
 Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?

How coalesce the small and great ? Alack,  
 For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back !  
 The couple there alone help Gregory :  
 Hark—from the hermit Peter's thin sad cry  
 At Claremont, yonder to the serf that says  
 Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays  
 Getting the Pope's curse off him ! The Crusade—  
 Or trick of breeding strength by other aid  
 Than strength, is safe : hark—from the wild harangue  
 Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang  
 Yonder ! The League—or trick of turning strength  
 Against pernicious strength, is safe at length :  
 Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert's making cease  
 The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace  
 Yonder ! God's Truce—or trick to supersede  
 The use of strength at all, is safe. Indeed  
 We trench upon the future ! Who shall found  
 Next step, next age—trail plenteous o'er the ground  
 Vine-like, produced by joy and sorrow, whence  
 Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence :  
 Knowledge by stress of Knowledge is it ? No—  
 E'en were Sordello ready to forego  
 His work for this, 'twere overleaping work  
 Some one must do before, howe'er it irk :  
 No end's in sight yet of that second road :  
 Who means to help must still support the load  
 Hildebrand lifted—why hast Thou, he groaned,  
 Imposed, my God, a thing thy Paul had moaned,  
 And Moses failed beneath, on me ? and yet  
 That grandest of the tasks God ever set  
 On man left much to do : a mighty wrench—  
 The scaffold falls—but half the pillars blench  
 Merely, start back again—perchance have been  
 Taken for buttresses : crash every screen,  
 Hammer the tenons better, and engage  
 A gang about your work, for the next age  
 Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part  
 By Knowledge ! then—ay, then perchance may start  
 Sordello on his race—but who'll divulge  
 Time's secrets ? lo, a step's awry, a bulge  
 To be corrected by a step we thought  
 Got over long ago—till that is wrought,  
 No progress ! and that scaffold in its turn  
 Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.  
 Meanwhile, your some half-dozen years of life  
 Longer, dispose you to forego the strife—  
 Who takes exception ? 'Tis Ferrara, mind,  
 Before us, and Goito's left behind :

As you then were, as half yourself, desist !  
 —The warrior-part of you may, an it list,  
 Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,  
 Fling them afor and taste the cream of joys  
 By wielding one in fancy,—what is bard  
 Of you, may spurn the vehicle that marred,  
 Elys so much, and in mere fancy glut  
 His sense on her free beauties—we have but  
 To please ourselves for law, and you could please  
 What then appeared yourself by dreaming these  
 Rather than doing these : now, fancy's trade  
 Is ended, mind, nor one half may evade  
 The other half : our friends are half of you :  
 Out of a thousand helps, just one or two  
 Can be accomplished presently—but flinch  
 From these (as from the faulchion raised an inch,  
 Elys described a couplet) and make proof  
 Of fancy,—and while one half lolls aloof  
 O' the grass, completing Rome to the tip-top—  
 See if, for that, the other half will stop  
 A tear, begin a smile : that rabble's woes,  
 Ludicrous in their patience as they chose  
 To sit about their town and quietly  
 Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless soldiery,  
 With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how  
 Polt-foot, sang they, was in a pitfall now,  
 Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,—  
 That crippled sprawling idiot who recounts  
 How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,  
 Till the pains crept from out him one by one,  
 And wriggles round the archers on his head  
 To earn a morsel of their chesnut bread,—  
 And Cino, always in the self-same place  
 Weeping ; beside that other wretch's case  
 Eyepits to ear one gangrene since he plied  
 The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide  
 A double watch in the noon sun ; and see  
 Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free,  
 Trim hacqueton, and sprucely scented air,  
 Campaigning it for the first time—cut there  
 In two already, boy enough to crawl  
 For latter orpine round the Southern wall,  
 Toma, where Richard's kept, because that whore  
 Marfisa the fool never saw before  
 Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege :  
 Then Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty liege,  
 Cared for her least of whims once, Berta, wed  
 A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso's dead,

Delivering herself of his first child  
 On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled  
 To fifty gazers. (Here a wind below  
 Made moody music augural of woe  
 From the pine barrier)—What if, now the scene  
 Draws to a shutting, if yourself have been  
 —Yoa, plucking purples in Goito's moss  
 Like edges of a trabea (not to cross  
 Your consul-feeling) or dry aloe-shafts  
 Here at Ferrara—He whom fortune wafts,  
 This very age her best inheritance  
 Of opportunities? Yet we advance  
 Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,  
 There's Salinguerra left you to persuade,  
 And then—

No—no—which latest chance secure!  
 Leapt up and cried Sordello: this made sure,  
 The Past is yet redeemable whose work  
 Was—help the Guelfs, and I, howe'er it irk,  
 Thus help! He shook the foolish aloe-haulm  
 Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm  
 To the appointed presence. The large head  
 Turned on its socket; And your spokesman, said  
 The large voice, is Elcorte's happy sprout?  
 Few such—(so finishing a speech no doubt  
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)  
 Our sober councils have diversified:  
 Elcorte's son! but forward as you may,  
 Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!  
 The hesitating sunset floated back,  
 Rosily traversed in a single track  
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth  
 Of pines to the huge eagle blacked in earth  
 Opposite, outlined sudden, spur to crest,  
 That solid Salinguerra, and caressed  
 Palma's contour; 'twas Day looped back Night's pall;  
 Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech  
 He meant should compensate the Past and reach  
 Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite  
 To his noon's labour, so proceed till night  
 At leisure! The contrivances to bind  
 Taurello body with the Cause and mind,  
 —Was the consummate rhetoric just that?  
 Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat  
 Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,  
 Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke:  
 Was 't not a touching incident—so prompt

A rendering the world its just accompt  
 Once proved its debtor ? Who'd suppose before  
 This proof that he, Goito's God of yore,  
 At duty's instance could demean himself  
 So memorably, dwindle to a Guelph ?  
 Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,  
 His inmost self at the out-portion peeped  
 Thus occupied ; then stole a glance at those  
 Appealed to, curious if her colour rose  
 Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged  
 The need of Lombardy's becoming purged  
 At soonest of her barons ; the poor part  
 Abandoned thus missing the blood at heart,  
 Spirit in brain, unseasonably off  
 Elsewhere ! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,  
 Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact  
 That way, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked  
 The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb  
 At his accession, looked as all fell plumb  
 To purpose and himself took interest  
 In every point his new instructor pressed  
 —Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal  
 To scrutinize Sordello head and heel :  
 Then means he . . . yes assent sure ? Well ? alas,  
 He said no more than, So it comes to pass  
 That poesy, sooner than politics,  
 Makes fade young hair : to think such speech could fix  
 Taurello !

Then a flash ; he knew the truth :  
 So fantasies shall break and fritter youth  
 That he has long ago lost earnestness,  
 Lost will to work, lost power to express  
 Even the need of working ! Ere the grave  
 No more occasions now, though he should crave  
 One such, in right of superhuman toil  
 To do what was undone, repair his spoil,  
 Alter the Past—nought brings again the chance !  
 Not that he was to die : he saw askance  
 Protract the ignominious years beyond  
 To dream in—time to hope and time despond,  
 Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice  
 As saved a trouble, suited to his choice,  
 One way or other—idle life out, drop  
 No few smooth verses by the way—for prop  
 A thyrsus these sad people should, the same,  
 Pick up, set store by, and, so far from blame,  
 Plant o'er his hearse convinced his better part  
 Survived him. Rather tear men out the heart

Of the truth! Sordello muttered, and renewed  
 His propositions for the Multitude.  
 , But Salinguerra who, the last attack,  
 Threw himself in his ruffling corslet back  
 To hear the better, smilingly resumed  
 Some task; beneath the carroch's warning boomed;  
 He must decide with Tito; courteously  
 He turned then, even seeming to agree  
 With his admonisher—Assist the Pope,  
 Extend his domination, fill the scope  
 O' the Church based on All, by All, for All—  
 Change Secular to Evangelical—  
 Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,  
 When sudden he looked, laughingly almost,  
 To Palma: This opinion of your friend's  
 For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?  
 Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength  
 (Here he drew out his baldric to its length)  
 To the Pope's Knowledge—let our King Richard slip,  
 Wide to the walls throw ope your gates, equip  
 Azzo with . . . but no matter! Who'll subscribe  
 To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe  
 Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,  
 "Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!"  
 —When Constance, for his couplets, would promote  
 Alcama, from a parti-coloured coat  
 To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.  
 Not that I see where couplet-making jars  
 With common sense: at Mantua we had borne  
 This chanted, easier than their most forlorn  
 Of bull-fights,—that's indisputable!

Brave!

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!  
 All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose  
 Mankind's to class him with their friends or foes?  
 A puny uncouth ailing vassal think  
 The world and him in some especial link?  
 Abrupt the visionary tether's burst—  
 What's to reward or what to be amerced  
 If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream  
 Deservingly, gets tangled by his theme  
 So far as to conceit his knack or gift  
 Or whatsoe'er it be of verse might lift  
 The globe, a lever like the hand and head  
 Of—Men of Action, as the Jongleurs said,  
 —The Great Men, in the people's dialect?

And not a moment did this scorn affect  
 Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,

Asking "what was," obtained a full response.  
 Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but  
 To look into his promptuary, put  
 His hand on a set thought in a set speech :  
 And was SordeNo fitted thus for each  
 Conjuncture ? No wise ; since within his soul  
 Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.  
 A healthy spirit like a healthy frame  
 Craves aliment in plenty and, the same,  
 Changes, assimilates its aliment :  
 Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent ?  
 Next day no formularies more you saw  
 Than figs or olives in a sated maw  
 —'Tis Knowldege, whither such perceptions tend,  
 They lose themselves in that, means to an end,  
 The Many Old producing some One New,  
 A Last unlike the First. If lies are true,  
 The Caliph Haroun's man of brass receives  
 A meal, ay, millet grains and lettuce leaves  
 Together in his stomach rattle loose—  
 You find them perfect next day to produce  
 But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,  
 Can roll an iron camel-collar flat  
 Like Haroun's self ! I tell you, what was stored  
 Parcel by parcel through his life, outpoured  
 That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing :  
 And round those three the People formed a ring,  
 Suspended their own vengeance, chose await  
 The issue of this strife to reinstate  
 Them in the right of taking it—in fact  
 He must be proved their lord ere they exact  
 Amends for that lord's defalcation. Last,  
 A reason why the phrases flowed so fast  
 Was in his quite forgetting for the time  
 Himself in his amazement that his rhyme  
 Disguised the royalty so much : he there—  
 They full face to him—and yet unaware  
 Who was the King and who . . . But if I lay  
 On thine my spirit and compel obey  
 His Lord—Taurello ? Impotent to build  
 Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled  
 In what such builder should have been as brook  
 One shame beyond the charge that he forsook  
 His function ! Set me free that shame I bend  
 A brow before, suppose new years to spend,  
 Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur—  
 Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur  
 At any crown he claims ! That I must cede

As 'tis my right to my especial meed—  
 Confess you fitter help the world than I  
 Ordained its champion from eternity,  
 Is much : but to behold you scorn the post  
 I quit in your behalf—as aught's to boast  
 Unless you help the world ! And while he rung  
 The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,  
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died  
 Into the distance, or embowering vied  
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier ;  
 And crowds of faces (only keeping clear  
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground  
 To fight their battle from) deep clustered round  
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,  
 Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death,  
 Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,  
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom Gods anoint  
 Though mortal to their rescue : now let sprawl  
 The snaky volumes hither, Typhon's all  
 For Hercules to trample—good report  
 From Salinguerra's only to extort ?  
 So was I (closed he his inculcating  
 A poet must be earth's essential king)  
 So was I, royal so, and if I fail  
 'Tis not the royalty ye witness quail  
 But one deposed who, caring not exert  
 Its proper essence, trifled malapert  
 With accidents instead—good things assigned  
 The herald of a better thing behind—  
 And, worthy through display of these, put forth  
 Never the inmost all-surpassing worth  
 That constitutes him King precisely since  
 As yet no other creature may evince  
 Its like : the power he took most pride to test,  
 Whereby all forms of life had been professed  
 At pleasure, forms already on the earth,  
 Was but a means to power whose novel birth  
 Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof—  
 Now, whether he came near or kept aloof,  
 Those forms unalterable first to last  
 Proved him her copy, not the protoplast  
 Of Nature : what would come of being free  
 By action to exhibit tree for tree,  
 Bird, beast for beast and bird, or prove earth bore  
 A veritable man or woman more ?  
 Means to an end, such proofs ; and what the end ?  
 Your essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—  
 Never contract ! Already you include



The multitude ; now let the multitude  
 Include yourself, and the result is new ;  
 Themselves before, the multitude turn you ,  
 This were to live and move and have (in them)  
 Your being, and secure a diadem  
 That's to transmit (because no cycle yearns  
 Beyond itself, but on itself returns)  
 When the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid  
 Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed  
 Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still  
 More potent than the last, of human Will,  
 And some new King depose the old. Of such  
 Am I—whom pride of this elates too much ?  
 Safe, rather say, mid troops of peers again ;  
 I, with my words, hailed brother of the train  
 Once deeds sufficed : for, let the world roll back,  
 Who fails, through deeds diverse soe'er, re-track  
 My purpose still, my task ? A teeming crust—  
 Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict—see ! Needs must  
 Emerge some Calm embodied these refer  
 (Saturn—no ! yellow-bearded Jupiter ?)  
 The brawl to ; some existence like a pact  
 And protest against chaos, some first fact  
 I' the faint of Time . . my deep of life, I know.  
 Is unavailing e'en to poorly show  
 (For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)  
 Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned—  
 The fullest effluence of the finest mind  
 All in degree, no way diverse in kind  
 From those about us, minds which, more or less,  
 Lofty or low, in moving seek impress  
 Themselves on somewhat ; but one mind has climbed  
 Step after step, by just ascent sublimed :  
 Thought is the soul of act, and stage by stage,  
 Is soul from body still to disengage  
 As tending to a freedom which rejects  
 Such help and incorporeally affects  
 The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,  
 Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,  
 Assigning them the simpler tasks it used  
 As patiently perform till Song produced  
 Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind : divest  
 Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed  
 Will dawns above us. But so much to win  
 Ere that. A lesser round of steps within  
 The last. About me, faces ! and they flock,  
 The earnest faces. What shall I unlock  
 By song ? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,

To minister : how much can mortals see  
 Of Life ? No more ? I covet the first task  
 And marshal you Life's elemental Masque  
 Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,  
 This light, this shade make prominent, suppress  
 All ordinary hues that softening blend  
 Such natures with the level : apprehend  
 Which evil is, which good, if I allot  
 Your Hell, the Purgatory, Heaven ye wot,  
 To those you doubt concerning : I enwomb  
 Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb,  
 Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agiluph  
 With the black chastening river I engulph ;  
 Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine  
 With languors of the planet of decline—  
 These fail to recognise, to arbitrate  
 Between henceforth, to rightly estimate  
 Thus marshalled in the Masque ! Myself, the while,  
 As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile  
 At my own showing ! Next age—what's to do ?  
 The men and women stationed hitherto  
 Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct  
 Each nature to its farthest or obstruct  
 At soonest in the world : Light, thwarted, breaks  
 A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,  
 Or Shadow, helped, freezes to gloom : behold  
 How such, with fit assistance to unfold,  
 Or obstacles to crush them, disengage  
 Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,  
 In presence of you all ! Myself implied  
 Superior now, as, by the platform's side,  
 Bidding them do and suffer to content  
 The world . . . no—that I wait not—circumvent  
 A few it has contented, and to these  
 Offer unveil the last of mysteries  
 I boast ! Man's life shall have yet freer play :  
 Once more I cast external things away  
 And Natures, varied now, so decompose  
 That . . . but enough ! Why fancy how I rose,  
 Or rather you advanced since evermore  
 Yourselves effect what I was fain before  
 Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,  
 What I leave bare yourselves can now invest ?  
 How we attained to talk as brothers talk,  
 In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk  
 From discontinuing old aids—To-day  
 Takes in account the work of Yesterday—  
 Has not the world a Past now, its adept

Consults ere he dispense with or accept  
 New aids ? a single touch more may enhance,  
 A touch less turn to insignificance  
 Those structures' symmetry the Past has strewed  
 The world with, once so bare : leave the mere rude  
 Explicit details, 'tis but brother's speech  
 We need, speech where an accent's change gives each  
 The other's soul—no speech to understand  
 By former audience—need was then expand,  
 Expatriate—hardly were they brothers ! true—  
 Nor I lament my less remove from you,  
 Nor reconstruct what stands already : ends  
 Accomplished turn to means : my art intends  
 New structure from the ancient : as they changed  
 The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged  
 The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright  
 As in his desert, by some simple bright  
 Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,  
 Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome  
 From Earth's reputed consummations razed  
 A seal the all-transmuting Triad blazed  
 Above. Ah, whose that fortune ? ne'ertheless  
 E'en he must stoop contented to express  
 No tithe of what's to say—the vehicle  
 Never sufficient—but his work is still  
 For faces like the faces that select  
 The single service I am bound effect  
 Nor murmur, bid me, still as poet, bow  
 Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow  
 The Kaiser's coming—which with heart, soul, strength,  
 I labour for, this eve, who feel at length  
 My past career's outrageous vanity  
 And would (as vain amends) die, even die  
 Now I first estimate the boon of life,  
 So death might bow Taurello—sure this strife  
 Is the last strife—the People my support.

My poor Sordello ! what may we extort  
 By this, I wonder ? Palma's lighted eyes  
 Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,  
 Began, You love him—what you'd say at large  
 If I say briefly ? First, your father's charge  
 To me, his friend, peruse : I guessed indeed  
 You were no stranger to the course decreed  
 Us both : I leave his children to the saints :  
 As for a certain project, he acquaints  
 The Pope with that, and offers him the best  
 Of your possessions to permit the rest  
 Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a strife

Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,  
 —To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan  
 Clatches already; extricate who can  
 Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo  
 Cartiglione, Loria—all go,  
 And with them go my hopes! 'Tis lost, then! Lost  
 This ~~eye~~, our crisis, and some pains it cost  
 Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd spent  
 Like our admonisher! But each his bent  
 Pursues—no question, one might live absurd  
 Oneself this while, by deed as he by word,  
 Persisting to obtrude an influence where  
 'Tis made account of much as . . . nay, you fare  
 With twice the fortune, youngster—I submit,  
 Happy to parallel my waste of wit  
 With the renowned Sordello's—you decide  
 A course for me—Romano may abide  
 Romano,—Bacchus! Who'd suppose the dearth  
 Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?  
 Say there's a prize in prospect, must disgrace  
 Betide competitors? An obscure place  
 Suits me—there wants youth, bustle, one to stalk  
 And attitudinize—some fight, more talk,  
 Most flaunting badges—'twere not hard make clear  
 Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here  
 —Here—pity they are like to lie! For me,  
 Whose station's fixed unceremoniously  
 Long since, small use contesting; I am but  
 The liegeman, you are born the lieges—shut  
 That gentle mouth now!—or resume your kin  
 In your sweet self; Palma were Ecelin  
 For me and welcome! Could that neck endure  
 This bauble for a cumbrous garniture  
 You should . . . or might one bear it for you? Stay—  
 I have not been so flattered many a day  
 As by your pale friend—Bacchus! The least help  
 Would lick the hind's fawn as a lion's whelp—  
 His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue  
 Beside—too writ! led—but, the main thing, young—  
 I could . . . why look ye!

And the badge was thrown  
 Across Sordello's neck: this badge alone  
 Makes you Romano's Head—the Lombard's curb  
 Turns on your neck which would, on mine, disturb  
 My pauldron, said Taurello. A mad act,  
 Nor dreamed about a moment since—in fact  
 Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce—  
 But he had dallied overmuch, this once,

With power : the thing was done, and he, aware  
 The thing was done, proceeded to declare  
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel  
 In serving, only feel by service well)  
 That he should make him all he said and more :  
 As good a scheme as any : what's to pore  
 At in my face ? he asked—ponder instead . «  
 This piece of news ; you are Romano's Head—  
 You cannot slacken pace so near the goal,  
 Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole  
 This time ! For you there's Palma to espouse—  
 For me, one crowning trouble ere I house  
 Like my compeer.

On which ensued a strange  
 And solemn visitation—mighty change  
 O'er every one of them—each looked on each—  
 Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech,  
 And when the giddiness sank and the haze  
 Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,  
 Sordello with the baldric on, his sire  
 Silent though his proportions seemed aspire  
 Momently ; and, interpreting the thrill  
 Night at its ebb, Palma you found was still  
 Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed  
 A year ago, while dying on her breast,  
 Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,  
 Her Ecelin had birth : their convoy's flight  
 Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame  
 That wallowed like a dragon at his game  
 The toppling city through—San Biagio rocks !  
 And wounded lies in her delicious locks  
 Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,  
 None of her wasted, just in one embrace  
 Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,  
 Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier  
 And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,  
 Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,  
 Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—drown  
 His colleague's clamour, Ecelin's up, down  
 The disarray : failed Adelaide see then  
 Who was the natural Chief, the Man of Men ?  
 Outstripping time her Ecelin burst swathe,  
 Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe  
 From wandering after his heritage  
 Lost once and lost for aye—what could engage  
 That deprecating glance ? A new Shape leant  
 On a familiar Shape—gloatingly bent  
 O'er his discomfiture ; 'mid wreaths it wore,

Still one outflamed the rest—her child's before  
 'Twas Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate  
 Rage startled her from Ecclin—too late!  
 A moment's work, and rival's foot had spurned  
 Never that brow to earth! Ere sense returned—  
 The act conceived, adventured, and complete,  
 They stole away towards an obscure retreat  
 Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain  
 (Nor even here Taurello moved) though pain  
 Was fled; and what assured them most 'twas fled,  
 All pain, was, if you raised the pale hushed head  
 'Twould turn this way and that, waver awhile,  
 And only settle into its old smile  
 (Graceful as the disquieted water-flag  
 Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag  
 On either side their path) when suffered look  
 Downward: they marched: no sign of life once shook  
 The company's close litter of crossed spears  
 Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears  
 Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash,  
 And she was gone. So far the action rash—  
 No crime. They laid Retrude in the font  
 Taurello's very gift, her child was wont  
 To sit beneath—constant as eve he came  
 To sit by its attendant girls the same  
 As one of them. For Palma, she would blend  
 With this magic spirit to the end  
 That ruled her first—but scarcely had she dared  
 To disobey the Adelaide who scared  
 Her into vowing never to disclose  
 A secret to her husband which so froze  
 His blood at half recital she contrived  
 To hide from him Taurello's infant lived  
 Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar  
 Romano's fortunes: and, a crime so far,  
 Palma received that action: she was told  
 Of Salinguerra's nature, and his cold  
 Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free  
 Impart the secret to Romano, she  
 Engaged to reposess Sordello of  
 His heritage, and hers, and that way doff  
 The mask, but after years, long years!—while now  
 Was not Romano's sign mark on that brow?

Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked:  
 And 'twas when speak he did, as if he mocked  
 The minstrel, who had not to move, he said,  
 Nor stir—should Fate defraud him of a shred  
 Of this son's infancy? much less his youth

(Laughingly all this) which to aid, in truth,  
 Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown  
 Old, not too old—'twas better keep alone  
 Till now, and never idly met till now :  
 —Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how  
 The intimations of this eve's event  
 Were futile—Friedrich means advance to Trent,  
 Thence to Verona, then to Rome—there stop—  
 Tumble the Church down, institute a-top  
 The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :  
 —That's now—no prophesying what may be  
 Anon, beneath a monarch of the clime,  
 Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime  
 At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide  
 On whom . . .

Embrace him, madman ! Palma cried  
 Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops burst apace  
 And his lips' blanching : he did not embrace  
 Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand  
 On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,  
 This while Sordello was becoming flushed  
 Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed, fancies rushed .  
 He pressed his hand upon his head and signed  
 Both should forbear him. Nay, the best's behind !  
 Taurello laughed—not quite with the same laugh :  
 The truth is, thus you scatter, ay, like chaff  
 The Guelfs a despicable monk recoils  
 From—nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils  
 Our triumph !—Friedrich ? Think you I intend  
 Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend  
 And brain I waste ? Think you the people clap  
 Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap  
 For any Friedrich to fill up ? 'Tis mine—  
 That's yours : I tell you towards some such design  
 Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,  
 And for another, yes—but worked no less  
 With instinct at my heart ; I else had swerved,  
 While now—look round ! My cunning has preserved  
 Samminiato—that's a central place  
 Secures us Florence, boy, in Pisa's case  
 By land as she by sea ; with Pisa ours,  
 And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours  
 The land at leisure ! Gloriously dispersed—  
 Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first  
 That flanked us (ah, you know not !) in the March ;  
 On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,  
 Romagna and Bologna, whose first span

Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan ;  
 Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure . . .  
 So he proceeded. Half of all this pure  
 Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,  
 But what was undone he felt sure to do  
 As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away  
 The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play—  
 Need of the sword now ! That would soon adjust  
 Aught wrong at present ; to the sword intrust  
 Sordello's whiteness, undersize ; 'twas plain  
 He hardly rendered right to his own brain—  
 Like a brave hound men educate to pride  
 Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,  
 As though he could not, gift by gift, match men !  
 Palma had listened patiently : but when  
 'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw  
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe  
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one,  
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,  
 Made him avert his visage and relieve  
 Sordello (you might see his corslet heave  
 The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak, then sank :  
 They left him in the chamber—all was blank.

And even reeling down the castle-stair  
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware  
 Palma was guide to him, the old device  
 —Something of Milan—how we muster thrice  
 The Torriani's strength there—all along  
 Our own Visconti cowed them—thus the song  
 Continued even while she bade him stoop,  
 Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,  
 The turnings to the gallery below,  
 Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.  
 When he had sate in silence long enough  
 Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff  
 She stopt the truncheon ; only to commence  
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence  
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of Elys' hair  
 And head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanch'd the livelong Summer—from his worst  
 Performance, the Goito, as his first :  
 And that at end, conceiving from the brow  
 And open mouth no silence would serve now,  
 Went on to say the whole world loved that man  
 And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,  
 Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase



As if an angel spoke : the foolish praise  
 Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made  
 Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,  
 A crown, an aureole—there must she remain  
 (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain  
 As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)  
 To get the best look at, in fittest niche  
 Dispose his saint ; that done, he kissed her brow—  
 Lauded her father for his treason now,  
 He told her, only how could one suspect  
 The wit in him ? whose clansman, recollect,  
 Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same,  
 Romano and his lady—so might claim  
 To know all, as she should—and thus begun  
 Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, not one  
 Fit to be told that foolish boy, he said,  
 But only let Sordello Palma wed,  
 —Then !

'Twas a dim long narrow place at best :  
 Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West  
 As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb—  
 A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom  
 Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set  
 Her free ; the grating held one ragged jet  
 Of fierce gold fire : he lifted her within  
 The hollow underneath—how else begin  
 Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew  
 The ages than with Palma plain in view ?  
 Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,  
 Pursuing his discourse ; a grand unchecked  
 Monotony made out from his quick talk  
 And the recurring noises of his walk ;  
 —Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent  
 Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,  
 Who hearten each the other against heart—  
 Boasting there's nought to care for, when, apart  
 The boaster, all's to care for : he, beside  
 Some shape not visible, in power and pride  
 Approached, out of the dark, ginglyly near,  
 Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear  
 Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,  
 Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,  
 And on he strode into the opposite dark  
 Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark  
 I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong  
 That crashed against the angle aye so long  
 After the last, punctual to an amount  
 Of mailed great paces you could not but count,

Prepared you for the pacing back again :  
 And by the snatches might you ascertain  
 That Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left  
 By this alone in Italy, they cleft  
 Asunder, crushed together, at command  
 Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,  
 Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—  
 But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, if we deign  
 Accept that compromise and stoop to give  
 Rome law, the Cæsars' Representative.  
 —Enough that the illimitable flood  
 Of triumphs after triumphs, understood  
 In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed  
 Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed  
 Him till, these long since quiet in their graves,  
 He found 'twas looked for that a long life's braves  
 Should somehow be made good—so, weak and worn,  
 Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn  
 Of the To-Come, to fight his latest fight.  
 But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height—  
 He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,  
 A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if  
 He had our very Italy to keep  
 Or cast away, or gather in a heap  
 To garrison the better—ay, his word  
 Was, “run the cucumber into a gourd,  
 Drive Trent upon Apulia”—at their pitch  
 Who spied the continents and islands which  
 Grew sickles, mulberry leaflets in the map—  
 (Strange that three such confessions so should hap  
 To Palma Dante spoke with in the clear  
 Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere.  
 Cunizza, as he called her ! Never ask  
 Of Palma more ! She sate, knowing her task  
 Was done, the labour of it—for success  
 Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress)  
 Triumph at height, I say, Sordello crowned—  
 Above the passage suddenly a sound  
 Stops speech, stops walk : back shrinks Taurello, bids  
 With large involuntary asking lids  
 Palma interpret. 'Tis his own foot-stamp—  
 Your hand ! His summons ! Nay, this idle damp  
 Befits not ! Out they two reeled dizzily :  
 “Visconti's strong at Milan,” resumed he  
 In the old somewhat insignificant way  
 (Was Palma wont years afterward to say)  
 As though the spirit's flight sustained thus far  
 Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are—

Palma, Taurello ; Eglamor anon,  
Ecelin, Alberic . . . ah, Naddo's gone !  
—Labours this moonrise what the Master meant  
“ Is Squarcialupo speckled ?—purulent  
I'd say, but when was Providence put out ?  
He carries somehow handily about  
His spite nor fouls himself ! ” Goito's vines  
Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough lines  
The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale against  
The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st  
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can tell ?  
As Heaven, now all's at end, did not so well  
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave  
Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve :  
While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha ! wait  
No longer—these in compass, forward fate !

---

## BOOK THE SIXTH.

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a thought,  
 And yet a false one, was, Man shrinks to nought  
 If matched with symbols of immensity—  
 Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky  
 Or sea, too little for their quietude :  
 And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood  
 Confirmed its speciousness while evening sank  
 Down the near terrace to the further bank,  
 And only one spot left out of the night  
 Glimmered upon the river opposite—  
 A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
 A sky-like space of water, ray for ray  
 And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
 As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
 Tumultuary splendors folded in  
 To die : nor turned he till Ferrara's din  
 (Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip  
 Who lets some first and eager purpose slip  
 In a new fancy's birth ; the speech keeps on  
 Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)  
 Aroused him, surely offered succour ; fate  
 Paused with this eve ; ere she precipitate  
 Herself . . . put off strange after-thoughts awhile,  
 That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile.  
 What help to pierce the Future as the Past  
 Lay in the plaining city ?

And at last  
 The main discovery and prime concern,  
 All that just now imported him to learn,  
 His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete  
 Heaven, rose again, and naked at his feet  
 Lighted his old life's every shift and change,  
 Effort with counter-effort ; nor the range  
 Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked  
 Some other—which of these could he suspect  
 Prying into them by the sudden blaze ?  
 The real way seemed made up of all the ways—

Mood after mood of the one mind in him ;  
 Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,  
 Of a transcendent all-embracing sense  
 Demanding only outward influence,  
 A soul, in Palfia's phrase, above his soul,  
 Power to uplift his power, such moon's control,  
 Over the sea-depths, and their mass had swept  
 Onward from the beginning and still kept  
 Its course ; but years and years the sky above  
 Held none, and so, untasked of any love,  
 His sensitiveness idled, now amort.  
 Alive now, and to sullenness or sport  
 Given wholly up, disposed itself anew  
 At every passing instigation, grew  
 And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,  
 Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt  
 Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race  
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place  
 For myriad charms ; not gathered up and, hurled  
 Right from its heart, encompassing the world.  
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,  
 Without a function : others made pretence  
 To strengths not half his own, yet had some core  
 Within, submitted to some moon, before  
 It still, superior still whate'er its force,  
 Were able therefore to fulfil a course  
 Nor missed Life's crown, authentic attribute—  
 To each who lives must be a certain fruit  
 Of having lived in his degree, a stage  
 Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,  
 To stop at ; and to which those spirits tend  
 Who, still discovering beauty without end,  
 Amass the scintillations for one star  
 —Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar,  
 And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest  
 By winning it to notice and invest  
 Their souls with alien glory some one day  
 Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,  
 Round to the perfect circle—soon or late  
 According as themselves are formed to wait ;  
 Whether 'tis human beauty will suffice  
 —The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,  
 Or human intellect seem best, or each  
 Combine in some ideal form past reach  
 On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,  
 Some love, hate even, take their place the same  
 That may be served—all this they do not lose,  
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose

What Hell shall be—a progress thus pursued  
 Through all existence, still above the food  
 That's offered them, still towering beyond  
 The widened range in virtue of their bond  
 Of sovereignty : not that a Palma's Love  
 A Salinguerra's Hate would equal prove  
 To swaying all Sordello : wherefore doubt,  
 Love meet for such a Strength, some Moon's without  
 To match his Sea ?—fear, Good so manifest,  
 Only the Best breaks faith ?—but that the Best  
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be  
 And is not : crave you gems ? where's penury  
 Of their material round us ? pliant earth,  
 The plastic flame—what balks the Mage his birth  
 —Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the block ?  
 Flinders enrich the strand and veins the rock—  
 No more ! Ask creatures ? Life in tempest, Thought  
 Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught  
 With fervors . . . ah, these forms are well enough—  
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff  
 Profuse at Nature's pleasure, Men beyond  
 These Men ! and thus, perchance, are over-fond  
 In arguing, from Good the Best, from force  
 Divided—force combined, an ocean's course  
 From this our sea whose mere intestine pants  
 Had seemed at times sufficient to our wants.  
 —External Power ? If none be adequate  
 And he have been ordained (a prouder fate)  
 A law to his own sphere ? the need remove  
 All incompleteness, be that law, that love ?  
 Nay, really such be others' laws, though veiled  
 In mercy to each vision that had failed  
 If unassisted by its Want, for lure,  
 Embodied ? stronger vision could endure  
 The simple want—no bauble for a truth !  
 The People were himself ; and by the ruth  
 At their condition was he less impelled  
 To alter the discrepancy beheld  
 Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part  
 Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,  
 Then palmed on him as alien woe—the Gueff  
 To succour, proud that he forsook himself ?  
 No : All's himself—all service, therefore, rates  
 Alike, nor serving one part, immolates  
 The rest : but all in time ! That lance of yours  
 Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,  
 That buckler's lined with many a Giant's beard  
 Ere long, Porphyrio, be the lance but reared,

The buckler wielded handsomely as now ;  
 But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,  
 Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,  
 And, if you hope we struggle through this flat,  
 Put lance and buckler up—next half-month lacks  
 A sturdy exercise of mace or axe  
 To cleave this disinal brake of prickly-pear  
 Bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,  
 Lames barefoot Agathon.

Oh, People, urge

Your claims !—for thus he ventured to the verge  
 Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust  
 Of his fast slipping resolution thrust  
 No less : accordingly the Crowd—as yet  
 He had unconsciously contrived forget  
 To dwell upon the points . . . one might assuage  
 The signal horrors sooner than engage  
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief  
 Not to be fancied off, obtain relief  
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,  
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work  
 To correspond—however, forth they stood :  
 And now content thy stronger vision, brood  
 On thy bare want ; the grave stript turf by turf,  
 Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf !

Down sank the People's Then ; uprose their Now.  
 These sad ones render service to ! And how  
 Piteously little must that service prove  
 —Had surely proved in any case ! for move  
 Each other obstacle away, let youth  
 Had been aware it had surprised a Truth  
 'Twere service to impart—can Truth be seized,  
 Settled forthwith, and of the captive eased  
 Its captor look around, since this alit  
 So happily, no gesture luring it,  
 The earnest of a flock to follow ? Vain,  
 Most vain ! a life's to spend ere this he chain,  
 To the poor crowd's complacence ; ere the crowd  
 Pronounce it captured he deserves a cloud  
 Its kin of twice the plumage—he, in turn,  
 If he shall live as many lives, may learn  
 Secure—not otherwise. Then Mantua called  
 Back to his mind how certain bards were thrall'd  
 —Buds blasted, but of breaths more like perfumes  
 Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion blooms  
 Could boast—some rose that burnt out heart in sweets,  
 A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer greets—

Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,  
 Grown bestial dreaming how become divine.  
 Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence  
 With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence  
 Must Truth be casual Truth, elicited  
 In sparks so mean, at intervals disspread  
 So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time  
 Of the world's story has not Truth, the prime  
 Of Truth, the very Truth which, loosed had hurled  
 Its course aright, been really in the world  
 Content the while with some mean spark by dint  
 Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint  
 Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream  
 Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam  
 Was looked for at the moment: he would dash  
 This badge to earth and all it brought, abash  
 Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest  
 The Kaiser from his purpose; would attest  
 His constancy in any case. Before  
 He dashes it, however, think once more!  
 For, was that little truly service? Ay—  
 I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy  
 Its ultimate Effect, but many flaws  
 Of vision blur each intervening Cause;  
 Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum  
 Of service, Now as filled as the To-come  
 With evidence of good—nor too minute  
 A share to vie with evil! How dispute  
 The Guelfs were fittest maintain in rule?  
 That made the life's work: not so easy school  
 Your day's work—say, on natures circumstanced  
 So variously, which yet, as each advanced  
 Or might impede that Guelf rule, it behoved  
 You, for the 'Then's sake, hate what Now you loved,  
 Love what you hated; nor if one man bore  
 Brand upon temples while his fellow wore  
 The aureole, would it task us to decide—  
 But portioned duly out, the Future vied  
 Never with the unparcellled Present! Smite  
 Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?  
 The Present's complete sympathies to break,  
 Aversions bear with, for a Future's sake  
 So feeble? 'Tito ruined through one speck,  
 The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?  
 This were work, true—but work performed at cost  
 Of other work—aught gained here, elsewhere lost—



For a new segment spoil an orb half-done—  
 Rise with the People one step, and sink . . . one ?  
 Would it were one step—less than the whole face—  
 Of things our novel duty bids erase !  
 Harms are to vanish ; what ? the Prophet saith,  
 The Minstrel singeth vainly then ? Old faith,  
 Old courage, born of the surrounding harms,  
 Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms ?  
 Oh, flame persists, but is not glare as staunch ?  
 Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch—  
 Blood dries to crimson—Evil's beautified  
 In every shape ! But Beauty thrust aside  
 You banish Evil : wherefore ? After all  
 Is Evil our result less natural  
 Than Good ? For overlook the Seasons' strife  
 With tree and flower—the hideous animal life,  
 Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt  
 For his solution, must endure the vaunt  
 Of Nature's angel, as a child that knows  
 Himself befooled, unable to propose  
 Aught better than the fooling—and but care  
 For Men, the varied People then and there,  
 Of which 'tis easy saying Good and Ill  
 Claim him alike ! Whence rose the claim but still  
 From Ill, the fruit of Ill—what else could knit  
 Him theirs but Sorrow ? Any free from it  
 Were also free from him ! A happiness  
 Could be distinguished in this morning's press  
 Of miseries—the fool's who passed a gibe  
 On thee, said he, so wedded to his tribe  
 He carries green and yellow tokens in  
 His very face that he's a Ghibellin—  
 Much hold on him that fool obtained ! Nay mount  
 Yet higher ; and upon Men's own account  
 Must Evil stay : for what is Joy ? To heave  
 Up one obstruction more, and common leave  
 What was peculiar—by this act destroy  
 Itself ; a partial death is every joy ;  
 The sensible escape, enfranchisement  
 Of a sphere's essence : once the vexed—content,  
 The cramped—at large, the growing circle—round,  
 All's to begin again—some novel bound  
 To break, some new enlargement's to entreat,  
 The sphere though larger is not more complete.  
 Now for Mankind's experience : who alone  
 Might style the unobstructed world his own ?  
 Whom palled Goito with its perfect things ?  
 Sordello's self ; whereas for Mankind springs

Salvation—hindrances are interposed  
 For them, not all Life's view at once disclosed  
 To creatures sudden on its summit left  
 With Heaven above and—yet of wings bereft  
 But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot  
 Where, range on range, the girdling forests shoot  
 Between the prospect and the throngs who scale  
 Earnestly ever, piercing veil by veil,  
 Confirmed with each discovery; in their soul  
 The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found that Whole,  
 Could they revert? Oh, testify! The space  
 Of time we judge so meagre to embrace  
 The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained  
 The Whole, to quite exhaust it: for nought's gained  
 But leave to look—not leave to do: Beneath  
 Soon sates the looker—look Above, then! Death  
 Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live  
 First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give  
 Body and spirit the bare right they claim  
 To pasture thee on a voluptuous shame  
 That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,  
 Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men—  
 Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck  
 Thine attributes away for sordid muck,  
 Yet manage from that very muck educe  
 Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to thy cruce  
 The world's discardings; think, if ingots pay  
 Such pains, the clods that yielded them are clay  
 To all save thee, and clay remain though quenched  
 Thy purging-fire; who's robbed then? Would I wrenched  
 An ample treasure forth!—As 'tis, why crave  
 A share that ruins me and will not save  
 Yourselves?—imperiously command I quit  
 The course that makes my joy nor will remit  
 Your woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse  
 The order (time instructs you) nor coerce  
 Each unit till, some predetermined mode,  
 The total be emancipate; our road  
 Is one, our times of travel many; thwart  
 No enterprising soul's precocious start  
 Before the general march; if slow or fast  
 All straggle up to the same point at last,  
 Why grudge my having gained a month ago  
 The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,  
 While you were landlocked? Speed your Then, but how  
 This badge would suffer you improve my Now!  
 His time of action for, against, or with  
 Our world (I labour to extract the pith

Of this and more) grew up, that even-tide,  
 Gigantic with its power of joy beside  
 The world's eternity of impotence  
 To profit though at his whole joy's expense.  
 Make nothing of that time because so brief?  
 Rather make more—instead of joy take grief  
 Before its novelty have time subside;  
 No time for the late savour—leave untried  
 Virtue, the creaming honey wine, quick squeeze  
 Vice like a biting spirit from the lees  
 Of life—together let wrath, hatred, lust,  
 All tyrannies in every shape be thrust  
 Upon this Now, which time may reason out  
 As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt—  
 But long ere then Sordello will have slept  
 Away—you teach him at Goito's crypt  
 There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill!  
 Stirring, the Few cope with the Many, still:  
 So much of dust as, quiet, makes a mass  
 Unable to produce three tufts of grass,  
 Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void  
 The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be employed!  
 And e'en though somewhat smarts the Crowd for this,  
 Contributes each his pang to make up bliss,  
 'Tis but one pang—one blood-drop to the bowl  
 Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl  
 So quick, stains ruddily the dull red cape,  
 And, kindling orbs dull as the unripe grape  
 Before, avails forthwith to dis entrance  
 The mischief—soon to lead a mystic dance  
 Among you! Nay, who sits alone in Rome?  
 Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home  
 For me—compelled to live? Oh, Life, life-breath,  
 Life-blood,—ere sleep be travail, life ere death!  
 This life to feed my soul, direct, oblique,  
 But always feeding! Hindrances? They pique—  
 Helps? such . . . but wherefore say my soul o'ertops  
 All height—than every depth profounder drops?  
 Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait  
 For some transcendent life reserved by Fate  
 To follow this? Oh, never! Fate I trust  
 The same my soul to; for, as who flings dust  
 Perchance—so facile was the deed, she chequed  
 The void with these materials to affect  
 That soul diversely—these consigned anew  
 To nought by death, what marvel if she threw  
 A second and superber spectacle  
 Before it? What may serve for sun—what still

Wander a moon above me—what else wind  
 About me like the pleasures left behind ?  
 And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh  
 Cling to me ? what's new laughter—soothes the fresh  
 Sleep like sleep ? Fate's exhaustless for my sake  
 In brave resource, but whether bids she slake  
 My thirst at this first rivulet or count  
 No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount  
 Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident  
 Of (taste) loquacious pearl the soft tree-tent  
 Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail  
 The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail  
 At bottom—Oh, 'twere too absurd to slight  
 For the hereafter the to-day's delight !  
 Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring—wear  
 Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair !  
 Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart  
 Offer to serve, contented for my part  
 To give this life up once for all, but grant  
 I really serve ; if otherwise, why want  
 Aught further of me ? Life they cannot chuse  
 But set aside—wherefore should I refuse  
 The gift ? I take it—I, for one, engage  
 Never to falter through the pilgrimage—  
 Or end it howling that the stock or stone  
 Were enviable, truly : I, for one,  
 Will praise the world you style mere anteroom  
 To the true palace—but shall I assume  
 —My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope  
 My eye the glance, before the doors fly ope  
 One moment ? What—with guarders row on row,  
 Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,  
 Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace  
 The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,  
 Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for ; laugh  
 At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff  
 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder ; why—  
 Admitted to the presence by and bye,  
 Should thought of these recurring make me grieve  
 Among new sights I reach, old sights I leave ?  
 Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone—  
 Bare floor-work too !—But did I let alone  
 That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule  
 Once and for ever ?—Floor-work ? No such fool !  
 Rather, were Heaven to forestall Earth I'd say  
 Must I be blessed or you ? Then my own way  
 Bless me—a firmer arm, a fleeter foot,  
 I'll thank you, but to no mad wings transmute

These limbs of mine—our greensward is too soft :  
 Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft—  
 We feel the bliss distinctlier having thus  
 Engines subservient, not mixed up with us—  
 Better move palpably through Heaven—nor, freed  
 Of flesh forsooth, from space to space proceed  
 'Mid flying synods of worlds—but in Heaven's marge  
 Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe  
 Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game  
 Made tremulously out in hoary flame !

Life ! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull  
 Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,  
 Aside so oft ; the death I fly, revealed  
 So oft a better life this life concealed,  
 And which sage, champion, martyr, thro' each path  
 Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,  
 The crippling-irons and the fiery chair :  
 —"Twas well for them ; let me become aware  
 As they, and I relinquish Life too ! Let  
 Life's secret but disclose itself ! Forget  
 Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—  
 I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel  
 —So much is Truth to me—What Is then ? Since  
 One object viewed diversely may evince  
 Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,  
 That way repel, why gloze upon the fact ?  
 Why must a single of the sides be right ?  
 What bids choose this and leave its opposite ?  
 No abstract Right for me—in youth endued  
 With Right still present, still to be pursued,  
 Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife  
 Each with its proper law and mode of life,  
 Each to be dwelt at ease in : thus to sway  
 Regally with the Kaiser, or obey  
 Implicit with his Serf of fluttering heart,  
 Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start  
 Up in the presence, then go forth and shout  
 That some should pick the unstrung jewels out--  
 Were well !

And, as in moments when the Past  
 Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast  
 Himself quite thro' mere secondary states  
 Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,  
 Into the mid vague yearnings overlaid  
 By these ; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove, glade,  
 And so into the very nucleus probe  
 That first determined there exist a Globe :

And as that's easiest half the globe dissolved,  
 So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved  
 By his flesh-half's break-up—the sudden swell  
 Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,  
 Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,  
 Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,  
 All qualities, in fine, recorded here,  
 Might be but Modes of Time and this one Sphere,  
 Urgent on these but not of force to bind  
 As Time—Eternity, as Matter—Mind,  
 If Mind, Eternity shall choose assert  
 Their attributes within a Life : thus gir.  
 With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct  
 Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill distinct,  
 Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—  
 Contrived to render easy, difficult,  
 This or the other course of . . . what new bond  
 In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond  
 Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good  
 To its arrangements. Once this understood,  
 As suddenly he felt himself alone,  
 Quite out of Time and this World all was known.  
 What made the secret of the past despair ?  
 (Most imminent when he seemed most aware  
 Of greatness in the Past—nought turned him mad  
 Like craving to expand the power he had,  
 Not a new power to be expanded)—just  
 This made it ; Soul on Matter being thrust,  
 'Tis Joy when so much Soul is wreaked in Time  
 On Matter,—let the Soul attempt sublime  
 Matter beyond its scheme and so prevent  
 Or more or less that deed's accomplishment,  
 And Sorrow follows : Sorrow to avoid—  
 Let the Employer match the thing Employed,  
 Fit to the finite his infinity,  
 And thus proceed for ever, in degree  
 Changed but in kind the same, still limited  
 To the appointed circumstance and dead  
 To all beyond : a sphere is but a sphere—  
 Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here--  
 Since to the spirit's absoluteness all  
 Are like : now of the present sphere we call  
 Life, are conditions—take but this among  
 Many ; the Body was to be so long  
 Youthful, no longer—but, since no control  
 Tied to that Body's purposes his Soul,  
 It chose to understand the Body's trade  
 More than the Body's self—had fain conveyed

Its boundless, to the body's bounded lot—  
 So, the soul permanent, the body not,—  
 Scarcely the one minute for enjoying here,  
 The soul must needs instruct its weak compeer,  
 Run o'er its capabilities and wring  
 A joy thence it holds worth experiencing—  
 Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,  
 The minute gone, the body's power's let go  
 Apportioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke,  
 Say, morning o'er the earth and all it woke—  
 From the volcano's vapour-flag to hoist  
 Black o'er the spread of sea, to the low moist  
 Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,  
 Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—  
 (The Small a sphere as perfect as the Great  
 To the soul's absoluteness)—meditate  
 On such an Autumn-morning's cluster-chord  
 And the whole music it was framed afford,  
 And, the chord's might discovered, what should pluck  
 One string, the finger, was found palsy-struck.  
 And then what marvel if the Spirit, shown  
 A saddest sight—the Body lost alone  
 Thro' its officious proffered help, deprived  
 Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,  
 Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence,—  
 Vaingloriously were fain, for recompense,  
 To stem the ruin even yet, protract  
 The Body's term, supply the power it lacked  
 From its infinity, compel it learn  
 These qualities were only Time's concern,  
 That Body may, with its assistance, barred—  
 Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward,  
 Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,  
 Of Wrong made Right and turn Ill Good below—  
 And the result is, the poor Body soon  
 Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,  
 Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.  
 So much was plain then, proper in the Past;  
 To be complete for, satisfy the whole  
 Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul  
 Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each  
 One sphere—our Time. But does our knowledge reach  
 No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke  
 But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,  
 Its loves and hates, as now when they let soar  
 The spirit, self-sufficient as before,  
 Tho' but the single space that shall elapse  
 'Twixt its enthrallment in new bonds perhaps?

Must Life be ever but escaped, which should  
 Have been enjoyed? nay, might have been and would,  
 Once ordered rightly, and a Soul's no whit  
 More than the Body's purpose under it  
 (A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
 A sky-like space of water, ray for ray  
 And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
 As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
 Tumultuary splendours folded in  
 To die) and which thus, far from first begin  
 Exciting discontent, but surest quelled  
 The Body if aspiring it rebelled.  
 But how so order Life? Still brutalize  
 The soul, the sad world's method—muffled eyes  
 To all that was before, shall after be  
 This sphere—and every other quality  
 Save some sole and immutable Great and Good  
 And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood  
 To follow? Never may some soul see All  
 —The Great before and after and the Small  
 Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,  
 And take the single course prescribed before,  
 As the king-bird with ages on his plumes  
 Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?  
 But where descry the Love that shall select  
 That course? Here is a Soul whom to affect  
 Nature has plied with all her means—from trees  
 And flowers—e'en to the Multitude . . . and these  
 Decides he save or no? One word to end!

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend  
 And speak for you. A Power above him still  
 Which, utterly incomprehensible,  
 Is out of rivalry, which thus he can  
 Love, tho' unloving all conceived by Man—  
 What need! And of—none the minutest duct  
 To that out-Nature, nought that would instruct  
 And so let rivalry begin to live—  
 But of a Power its representative  
 Who, being for authority the same,  
 Communication different, should claim  
 A course the first chose and this last revealed—  
 This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—  
 The utter need!

What has Sordello found?  
 Or can his spirit go the mighty round  
 At length, end where our souls begun? as says  
 Old fable, the two doves were sent two ways



About the world—where in the midst they met  
 Tho' on a shifting waste of sand, men set  
 Jove's temple? Quick, what has Sordello found?  
 For they approach—approach—that foot's rebound .  
 Palma? No, Salinguerra tho' in mail;  
 They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil  
 Aside—and you divine who sat there dead '  
 Under his foot the badge; still, Palma said,  
 A triumph lingering in the wide eyes  
 Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies  
 Help from above in his extreme despair,  
 And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there  
 With short quick passionate cry; as Palma prest  
 In one great kiss her lips upon his breast  
 It beat. By this the hermit-bee has stopped  
 His day's toil at Goito—the new-cropped  
 Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit,  
 Twirled so, and filed all day—the mansion's fit—  
 God counselled for; as easy guess the word  
 That passed betwixt them and become the third  
 To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax  
 Him with one fault—so no remembrance racks  
 Of the stone maidens and the font of stone  
 He, creeping thro' the crevice, leaves alone—  
 Alas, my friend—Alas Sordello! whom  
 Anon we laid within that cold font-tomb—  
 And yet again alas!

And now is't worth  
 Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth  
 How Salinguerra extricates himself  
 Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf  
 May fight their fiercest? If Count Richard sulked  
 In durance, or the Marquis paid his mulet,  
 Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,  
 Was peace; our chief made some frank overture  
 That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast  
 On its disposer, and Taurello passed  
 With foe and friend for an outstripping soul  
 Nine days at least: then, fairly reached the goal,  
 He, by one effort, blotted the great hope  
 Out of his mind, no further tried to cope  
 With Este that mad evening's style, but sent  
 Away the Legate and the League, content  
 No blame at least the brothers had incurred,  
 —Despatched a message to the Monk he heard  
 Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,  
 Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat

And ne'er spoke more,—informed the Ferrarese  
 He but retained their rule so long as these  
 Lingered in pupilage—and last, no mode  
 Apparent else of keeping safe the road  
 From Germany direct to Lombardy  
 For Friedrich, none, that is, to guarantee  
 The faith and promptitude of who should next  
 Obtain Sofia's dowry, sore perplexed—  
 (Sofia being youngest of the tribe  
 Of daughters Ecelin was wont to bribe  
 The envious magnates with—nor since he sent  
 Enrico Egna this fair child had Trent  
 Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—we lost  
 Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post—  
 Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock ?)  
 Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock  
 In pure necessity, and so destroyed  
 His slender last of chances, quite made void  
 Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes  
 Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,  
 Was sucked into Romano: and so hushed  
 He up this evening's work, that when, 'twas brushed  
 Somehow against by a blind chronicle  
 Which, chronicling whatever woe befell  
 Ferrara, scented this the obscure woe  
 And "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo  
 Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his Sire,"  
 The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire  
 Which of Sofia's five he meant. The chaps  
 Of his dead hope were tardy to collapse,  
 Obliterated not the beautiful  
 Distinctive features at a crash—scarce dull  
 Next year, as Azzo, Boniface withdrew  
 Each to his stronghold; then (securely too  
 Ecelin at Campese slept—close by  
 Who likes may see him in Solagna lie  
 With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote  
 The Cavalier he was)—then his heart smote  
 Young Ecelin conceive! Long since adult,  
 And, save Vicenza's business, what result  
 In blood and blaze? so hard 'twas intercept  
 Sordello till Sordello's option. Stept  
 Its lord on Lombardy—for in the nick  
 Of time when he at last and Alberic  
 Closed with Taurello, came precisely news  
 That in Verona half the souls refuse  
 Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—  
 Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,

'Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth :  
 Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth  
 Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back  
 From temporary station to a track  
 That suited : news received of this acquist,  
 Friedrich did come to Lombardy—who missed  
 Taurello ? Yet another year—they took  
 Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook  
 For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three  
 After conspired to call themselves “ the Free,”  
 Opposing Alberic, these Bassanese,  
 (Without Sordello !)—Ecelin at ease  
 Slaughtered them so observably that oft  
 A little Salinguerra looked with soft  
 Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age  
 To get appointed his proud uncle's page :  
 More years passed, and that sire was dwindled down  
 To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown  
 Better through age, his parts still in repute,  
 Subtle—how else ?—but hardly so astute  
 As his contemporaneous friends professed—  
 Undoubtedly a brawler—for the rest,  
 Known by each neighbour, so allowed for, let  
 Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret  
 Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear—trap  
 The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap  
 A battered pinion—was the word. In fine,  
 One flap too much and Venice's marine  
 Was meddled with ; no overlooking that !  
 We captured him in his Ferrara, fat  
 And florid at a banquet, more by fraud  
 Than force, to speak the truth—there's slender laud  
 Ascribed you for assisting eighty years  
 To pull his death on such a man—fate shears  
 The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads  
 You fritter : so, presiding his board-head,  
 A great smile your assurance all went well  
 With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell !)  
 In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,  
 Made some pretence at fighting, just amends  
 For the shame done his eighty years—apart  
 The principle, none found it in his heart  
 To be much angry with Taurello—gained  
 Our galleys with the prize, and what remained  
 But carry him to Venice for a show ?  
 —Set him, as 'twere, down gently—free to go  
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe  
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve

'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens  
 Gathered importunately, fives and tens,  
 To point their children the Magnifico,  
 All but a monarch once in firm-land, go  
 His gait among them now—it took, indeed,  
 Fully this Ecelin to supersede  
 That man, remarked the seniors. Singular  
 Sordello's inability to bar  
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought  
 About by his strange disbelief that aught  
 Was to be done, should fairly thrust the Twain  
 Under Taurello's tutelage, that, brain  
 And heart and hand, be forthwith in one rod  
 Indissolubly bound to baffle God  
 Who loves the world—should thus allow the thin  
 Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,  
 And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic  
 (Mere man, alas) to put his problem quick  
 To demonstration—prove wherever's will  
 To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill  
 Or good : anointed, then, to rend and rip—  
 Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,  
 They plagued the world : a touch of Hildebrand  
 (So far from obsolete ! ) made Lombards band  
 Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,  
 And saving Milan win the world's applause.  
 Ecelin perished : and I think grass grew  
 Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù  
 By San Zenon where Alberic in turn  
 Saw his exasperated captors burn  
 Seven children with their mother, and, regaled  
 So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed  
 To death through raunce and bramble-bush : I take  
 God's part and testify that mid the brake  
 Wild o'er his castle on Zenone's knoll  
 You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—  
 Chirrup the contumacious grasshopper,  
 Rustles the lizards and the cushats chirre  
 Above the ravage : there, at deep of day  
 A week since, heard I the old Canon say  
 He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst  
 And Alberic's huge skeleton unhcarsed  
 Five years ago, no more : he added, June's  
 A month for carding off our first cocoons  
 The silkworms fabricate—a double news,  
 Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose .  
 And Naddo gone, all's gone ; not Eglamor !  
 Believe I knew the face I waited for,

A guest my spirit of the golden courts :  
 Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,  
 Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained  
 Its joyous look of love ! Suns waxed and waned,  
 And still my spirit held an upward flight,  
 Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light  
 More and more gorgeous—ever that face there  
 The last admitted ! crossed, too, with some care  
 As perfect triumph were not sure for all,  
 But on a few enduring damp must fall,  
 A transient struggle, haply a painful sense  
 Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence  
 Slight starting tears easily wiped away,  
 Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play  
 Of irrepressible admiration—not  
 Aspiring, all considered, to their lot  
 Who ever, just as they prepare ascend  
 Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend  
 Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,  
 That upturned fervid face and hair put back !

Is there no more to say ? He of the rhymes—  
 Many a tale of this retreat betimes  
 Was born : Sordello die at once for men ?  
 The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen  
 Relating how a Prince Visconti saved  
 Mantua and elsewhere notably behaved—  
 Who thus by fortune's ordering events  
 Passed with posterity to all intents  
 For just the God he never could become :  
 As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb  
 In praise of him : while what he should have been,  
 Could be, and was not—the one step too mean  
 For him to take, we suffer at this day  
 Because of ; Ecelin had pushed away  
 Its chance ere Dante could arrive to take  
 That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake :  
 He did much—but Sordello's step was gone.  
 Thus had Sordello ta'en that step alone,  
 Apollo had been compassed—'twas a fit  
 He wished should go to him, not he to it  
 —As one content to merely be supposed  
 Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed  
 Really at home—one who was chiefly glad  
 To have achieved the few real deeds he had  
 Because that way assured they were not worth  
 Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth—  
 A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes  
 Never itself, itself—had he embraced

Their cause then, Men had plucked Hesperian fruit  
 And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot  
 All he was anxious to appear but scarce  
 Solicitous to be : a sorry farce  
 Such life is after all—cannot I say\*  
 He lived for some one better thing ? this way—  
 Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill  
 By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,  
 Morning just up, higher and higher runs  
 A child barefoot and rosy—See ! the sun's  
 On the square castle's inner-court's green wall  
 —Like the chine of some fossil animal  
 Half turned to earth and flowers ; and thro' the haze  
 (Save where some slender patches of grey maize  
 Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost  
 The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost  
 Matting the balm and mountain camomile :  
 Up and up goes he, singing all the while  
 Some unintelligible words to beat  
 The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet  
 So worsted is he at the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sunblanched the livelong summer.—All that's left  
 Of the Goito lay ! And thus bereft,  
 Sleep and forget, Sordello . . . in effect  
 He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect  
 Not utterly companionless ; but, friends,  
 Wake up ; the ghost's gone, and the story ends  
 I'd fain hope, sweetly—seeing, peri or ghoul,  
 That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,  
 Evil or good, judicious authors think  
 According as they vanish in a stink  
 Or in a perfume : friends be frank ; ye snuff  
 Civet, I warrant : really ? Like enough—  
 Merely the savour's rareness—any nose  
 May ravage with impunity a rose—  
 Rifle a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours :  
 I'd tell you that same pungency ensures  
 An after-gust, but that were overbold :  
 Who would has heard Sordello's story told.



**MEN AND WOMEN.**





## MEN AND WOMEN.

---

### LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

---

#### I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles  
Miles and miles  
On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
Half-asleep  
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop  
As they crop—

#### II.

Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
(So they say)  
Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
Peace or war.

#### III.

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,  
As you see,  
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
From the hills  
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run  
Into one)

#### IV.

Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires  
Up like fires  
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
Bounding all,  
Made of marble, men might march on nor be prest,  
Twelve abreast.

## V.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass  
    Never was !  
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads  
    And embeds  
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
    Stock or stone—

## VI.

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe  
    Long ago ;  
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame  
    Struck them tame ;  
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold  
    Bought and sold.

## VII.

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
    On the plains,  
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
    Overscored,  
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks  
    Through the chinks—

## VIII.

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time  
    Sprang sublime,  
And a burning ring all round, the chariots traced  
    As they raced,  
And the monarch and his minions and his dames  
    Viewed the games.

## IX.

And I know, while thus the quiet coloured eve  
    Smiles to leave  
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
    In such peace,  
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey  
    Melt away—

## X.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair  
    Waits me there

In the turret, whence the charioteers caught soul  
     For the goal,  
 When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,  
     dumb  
 Till I come.

## XI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
     Far and wide,  
 All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'  
     Colonnades,  
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,  
     All the men!

## XII.

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,  
     Either hand  
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace  
     Of my face,  
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech  
     Each on each.

## XIII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
     South and north,  
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high  
     As the sky,  
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—  
     Gold, of course.

## XIV.

Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!  
     Earth's returns  
 For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!  
     Shut them in,  
 With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.  
     Love is best!

## A LOVER'S QUARREL.

## I.

Oh, what a dawn of day !  
How the March sun feels like May !  
    All is blue again  
    After last night's rain,  
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.  
    Only, my Love's away !  
I'd as lief that the blue were grey.

## II.

Runnels, which rillels swell,  
Must be dancing down the dell  
    With a foamy head  
    On the beryl bed  
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell ;  
    Each with a tale to tell,  
Could my Love but attend as well.

## III.

Dearest, three months ago !  
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—  
    When the wind would edge  
    In and in his wedge,  
In, as far as the point could go—  
    Not to our ingle, though,  
Where we loved each the other so !

## IV.

Laughs with so little cause !  
We devised games out of straws.  
    We would try and trace  
    One another's face  
In the ash, as an artist draws ;  
    Free on each other's flaws,  
How we chattered like two church daws !

## V.

What's in the "Times?"—a scold  
 At the emperor deep and cold;  
     He has taken a bride  
     To his gruesome side,  
 That's as fair as himself is bold:  
     There they sit ermine-stoled,  
 And she powders her hair with gold.

## VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!  
 Miles and miles of gold and green  
     Where the sun-flowers blow  
     In a solid glow,  
 And to break now and then the screen—  
     Black neck and eyeballs keen,  
 Up a wild horse leaps between!

## VII.

Try, will our table turn?  
 Lay your hands there light, and yearn  
     Till the yearning slips  
     Thro' the finger tips  
 In a fire which a few discern,  
     And a very few feel burn,  
 And the rest, they may live and learn!

## VIII.

Then we would up and pace,  
 For a change, about the place,  
     Each with arm o'er neck.  
     'Tis our quarter-deck,  
 We are seamen in woeful case.  
     Help in the ocean-space!  
 Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

## IX.

See, how she looks now, drest  
 In a sledging-cap and vest.  
     'Tis a huge fur cloak—  
     Like a reindeer's yoke  
 Falls the lappet along the breast:  
     Sleeves for her arms to rest,  
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

## X.

Teach me to flirt a fan  
 As the Spanish ladies can,  
     Or I tint your lip  
     With a burnt stick's tip  
 And you turn into such a man!  
     Just the two spots that span  
 Half the bill of the young male swan.

## XI.

Dearest, three months ago  
 When the mesmeriser Snow  
     With his hand's first sweep  
     Put the earth to sleep,  
 'Twas a time when the heart could show  
     All—how was earth to know,  
 'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro!

## XII.

Dearest, three months ago  
 When we loved each other so,  
     Lived and loved the same  
     Till an evening came  
 When a shaft from the Devil's bow  
     Pierced to our ingle-glow,  
 And the friends were friend and foe!

## XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—  
 'Twas a bubble born of breath,  
     Neither sneer nor vaunt,  
     Nor reproach nor taunt.  
 See a word, how it severeth!  
     Oh, power of life and death  
 In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

## XIV.

Woman, and will you cast  
 For a word, quite off at last,  
     Me, your own, your you,—  
     Since, as Truth is true,  
 I was you all the happy past—  
     Me do you leave aghast  
 With the memories we amassed?

## XV.

Love, if you knew the light  
 That your soul casts in my sight,  
     How I look to you •  
     For the pure and true,  
 And the beauteous and the right,—  
     Bear with a moment's spite  
 When a mere mote threatens the white!

## XVI.

What of a hasty word?  
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred  
     By a worm's pin-prick  
     Where its roots are quick?  
 See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred—  
     Ear, when a straw is heard  
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

## XVII.

Foul be the world or fair,  
 More or less, how can I care?  
     'Tis the world the same  
     For my praise or blame,  
 And endurance is easy there.  
     Wrong in the one thing rare—  
 Oh, it is hard to bear!

## XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close,  
 When the almond-blossom blows;  
     We shall have the word  
     In that minor third  
 There is none but the cuckoo knows—  
     Heaps of the guelder-rose!  
 I must bear with it, I suppose.

## XIX.

Could but November come,  
 Were the noisy birds struck dumb  
     At the warning slash  
     Of his driver's-lash—  
 I would laugh like the valiant Thumb  
     Facing the castle glum  
 And the giant's fee-faw-fum!



## XX.

Then, were the world well stript  
 Of the gear wherein equipped  
     We can stand apart,  
     Heart dispense with heart  
 In the sun, with the flowers unripped,—  
     Oh, the world's hangings ripped,  
 We were both in a bare-walled crypt !

## XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry  
 "But one freezes here ! and why ?  
     When a heart as chill  
     At my own would thrill  
 Back to life, and its fires out-fly ?  
     Heart, shall we live or die ?  
 The rest, . . . settle it by and by !"

## XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,  
 And forgive me as before.  
     Just at twelve o'clock  
     I shall hear her knock  
 In the worst of a storm's uproar—  
     I shall pull her through the door—  
 I shall have her for evermore !

## EVELYN HOPE.

## I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead  
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
 That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;  
     She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,  
 Beginning to die too, in the glass.  
     Little has yet been changed, I think—  
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
     Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

## II.

Sixteen years old when she died !  
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name—  
 It was not her time to love : beside,  
 Her life had many a hope and aim,  
 Duties enough and little cares,  
 And now was quiet, now astir—  
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares,  
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

## III.

It is too late then, Evelyn Hope ?  
 What, your soul was pure and true,  
 The good stars met in your horoscope,  
 Made you of spirit, fire and dew—  
 And just because I was thrice as old,  
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide  
 Each was nought to each, must I be told ?  
 We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

## IV.

No, indeed ! for God above  
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
 And creates the love to reward the love,—  
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake !  
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few—  
 Much is to learn and much to forget  
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

## V.

But the time will come,—at last it will,  
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,  
 In the lower earth, in the years long still,  
 That body and soul so pure and gay ?  
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,  
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red—  
 And what you would do with me, in fine,  
 In the new life come in the old one's stead.

## VI.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,  
 Given up myself so many times,  
 Gained me the gains of various men,  
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;

Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,  
 Either I missed or itself missed me—  
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!  
 What is the issue? let us see!

## VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while;  
 My heart seemed full as it could hold—  
 There was place and to spare for the frank young smile  
 And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.  
 So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—  
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.  
 There, that is our secret! go to sleep;  
 You will wake, and remember, and understand.

---

## UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

---

## I.

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,  
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square.  
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

## II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!  
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;  
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a  
 beast.

## III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull  
 Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's skull,  
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!  
 —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned  
 wool.

## IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?  
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to  
 take the eye!  
 Houses in four straight lines. not a single front awry!

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by:  
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets  
     •high;  
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

## V.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,  
 'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the  
     heights:  
 You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam  
     and wheeze,  
 And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive trees.

## VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? you've summer all at once;  
 In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns!  
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,  
 The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell,  
 Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and  
     sell.

## VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and  
     splash!  
 In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows  
     flash  
 On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle  
     and pash  
 Round the lady atop in the coach—fifty gazers do not abash,  
 Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a  
     sort of sash!

## VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though you linger,  
 Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean lifted fore-  
     finger.  
 Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and  
     mingle,  
 Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.  
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicada is shrill,  
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs  
     on the hill.  
 Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever  
     and chill.

## IX.

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin :  
 No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in :  
 You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.  
 By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood,  
     draws teeth ;  
 Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.  
 At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play, piping  
     hot !  
 And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were  
     shot.  
 Above it, behold the archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes,  
 And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law  
     of the Duke's !  
 Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-  
     and-so  
 Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,  
 “And moreover,” (the sonnet goes rhyming,) “the skirts of  
     St. Paul has reached,  
 Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than  
     ever he preached.”  
 Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady borne  
     smiling and smart  
 With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords stuck  
     in her heart !  
*Bang, whang, whang*, goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife ;  
 No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleasure in  
     life.

## X.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear ! fowls, wine, at double the  
     rate.  
 They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays  
     passing the gate  
 It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city !  
 Beggars can scarcely be choosers—but still—ah, the pity, the  
     pity !  
 Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls  
     and sandals,  
 And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow  
     candles.  
 One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with  
     handles,  
 And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better preven-  
     tion of scandals.  
*Bang, whang, whang*, goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.  
 Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life !

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

---

### I.

LET's contend no more, Love,  
 Strive nor weep—  
 All be as before, Love,  
 —Only sleep !

### II.

What so wild as words are ?  
 —I and thou  
 In debate, as birds are,  
 Hawk on bough !

### III.

See the creature stalking  
 While we speak--  
 Hush and hide the talking,  
 Check on check !

### IV.

What so false as truth is,  
 False to thee ?  
 Where the serpent's tooth is,  
 Shun the tree—

### V.

Where the apple reddens  
 Never pry--  
 Lest we lose our Edens,  
 Eve and I !

### VI.

Be a god and hold me  
 With a charm—  
 Be a man and fold me  
 With thine arm !

## VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love !  
 As I ought  
 I will speak thy speech, Love,  
 Think thy thought—

## VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,  
 Both demands,  
 Laying flesh and spirit  
 In thy hands !

## IX.

That shall be to-morrow  
 Not to-night :  
 I must bury sorrow  
 Out of sight.

## X.

—Must a little weep, Love,  
 —Foolish me !  
 And so fall asleep, Love,  
 Loved by thee.

## FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !  
 You need not clap your torches to my face.  
 Zooks, what's to blame ? you think you see a monk !  
 What, it's past midnight, and you go the rounds,  
 And here you catch me at an alley's end  
 Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar.  
 The Carmine's my cloister : hunt it up,  
 Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,  
 Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,  
 And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,  
 Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company !  
 Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you'll take

Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,  
 And please to know me likewise. Who am I?  
 Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend  
 Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?  
 Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,  
 In the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!  
 Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,  
 How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!  
 But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves  
 Pick up a manner nor discredit you.  
 Zooks, are we pilehards, that they sweep the streets  
 And count fair prize what comes into their net?  
 He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!  
 Just such a face! why, sir, you make amends.  
 Lord! I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go  
 Drink out this quarter-florin to the health  
 Of the munificent House that harbours me  
 (And many more beside, lads! more beside!)  
 And all's come square again. I'd like his face—  
 His, elbowing on his comrade in the door  
 With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds  
 John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair  
 With one hand ("look you, now," as who should say)  
 And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!  
 It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,  
 A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!  
 Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.  
 What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,  
 You know them and they take you? like enough!  
 I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—  
 "Tell you I liked your looks at very first.  
 Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.  
 Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands  
 To roam the town and sing out carnival,  
 And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,  
 A-painting for the great man, saints and saints  
 And saints again. I could not paint all night—  
 Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.  
 There came a hurry of feet and little feet,  
 A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—  
*I'lower o' the broom,*  
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*  
*I'lower o' the quince,*  
*I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?*  
*I'lower o' the thyme*—and so on. Round they went.  
 Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter,  
 Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—three slim shapes—  
 And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,



That's all I'm made of ! Into shreds it went,  
 Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,  
 All the bed furniture—a dozen knots,  
 There was a ladder ! down I let myself,  
 Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,  
 And after them. I came up with the fun  
 Hard by St. Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—  
*Flower o' the rose,*  
*If I've been merry, what matter who knows ?*  
 And so as I was stealing back again  
 To get to bed and have a bit of sleep  
 Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work  
 On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast  
 With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,  
 You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see !  
 Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—  
 Mine's shaved,—a monk, you say—the sting's in that !  
 If Master Cosimo announced himself,  
 Mum's the word naturally ; but a monk !  
 Come, what am I a beast for ? tell us, now !  
 I was a baby when my mother died  
 And father died and left me in the street.  
 I starved there, God knows how, a year or two  
 On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,  
 Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day  
 My stomach being empty as your hat,  
 The wind doubled me up and down I went.  
 Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,  
 (Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)  
 And so along the wall, over the bridge,  
 By the straight cut to the convent. Six words, there,  
 While I stood munching my first bread that month :  
 " So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father  
 Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—  
 " To quit this very miserable world ?  
 Will you renounce " . . . The mouthful of bread ? thought I  
 By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of me ;  
 I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,  
 Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,  
 Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici,  
 Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.  
 Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,  
 'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,  
 The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,  
 And day-long blessed idleness beside !  
 " Let's see what the urchin's fit for "—that came next.  
 Not overmuch their way, I must confess.  
 Such a to-do ! they tried me with their books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste !  
*Flower o' the clove,*  
*All the Latin I construe is, " amo " I love !*  
 But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets  
 Eight years together, as my fortune was,  
 Watching folk's faces to know who will fling  
 The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,  
 And who will curse or kick him for his pains—  
 Which gentleman processional and fine,  
 Holding a candle to the Sacrament  
 Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch  
 The droppings of the wax to sell again,  
 Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—  
 How say I ?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop  
 His bone from the heap of offal in the street !  
 —The soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,  
 He learns the look of things, and none the less  
 For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.  
 I had a store of such remarks, be sure,  
 Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :  
 I drew men's faces on my copy-books,  
 Scrawled them within the antiphony's marge,  
 Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,  
 Found nose and eyes and chin for A.'s and B.'s,  
 And made a string of pictures of the world  
 Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,  
 On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.  
 " Nay," quoth the Prior, " turn him out, d'ye say ?  
 In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.  
 What if at last we get our man of parts,  
 We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese  
 And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine  
 And put the front on it that ought to be ! "  
 And hereupon they bade me daub away.  
 Thank you ! my head being crammed, their walls a blank,  
 Never was such prompt disemburdening.  
 First, every sort of monk the black and white,  
 I drew them, fat and lean : then folks at church,  
 From good old gossips waiting to confess  
 Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—  
 To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,  
 Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there  
 With the little children round him in a row  
 Of admiration, half for his beard and half  
 For that white anger of his victim's son  
 Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,  
 Signing himself with the other because of Christ  
 (Whose sad face on the cross sees only this

After the passion of a thousand years)  
 Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head  
 Which the intense eyes looked through, came at eve  
 On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,  
 Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers  
 The brute took growling, prayed, and then was gone.  
 I painted all, then cried "'tis ask and have—  
 Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,  
 And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.  
 The monks closed in a circle and praised loud  
 Till checked, (taught what to see and not to see,  
 Being simple bodies) "that's the very man!  
 Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!  
 That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes  
 To care about his asthma: it's the life!"  
 But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and fumed—  
 Their betters took their turn to see and say:  
 The Prior and the learned pulled a face  
 And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here  
 Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!  
 Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true  
 As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!  
 Your business is not to catch men with show,  
 With homage to the perishable clay,  
 But lift them over it, ignore it all,  
 Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.  
 Your business is to paint the souls of men—  
 Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no it's not . . .  
 It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—  
 (In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)  
 It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!  
 Give us no more of body than shows soul.  
 Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God!  
 That sets you praising,—why not stop with him?  
 Why put all thoughts of praise out of our heads  
 With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?  
 Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!  
 Rub all out, try at it a second time.  
 Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,  
 She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—  
 Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off—  
 Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?  
 A fine way to paint soul, by painting body  
 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further  
 And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white  
 When what you put for yellow's simply black,  
 And any sort of meaning looks intense  
 When all beside itself means and looks nought.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,  
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,  
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,  
 Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,  
 The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty  
 You can't discover if it means hope, fear,  
 Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?  
 Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,  
 Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
 And then add soul and heighten them threefold?  
 Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—  
 (I never saw it—put the case the same—)  
 If you get simple beauty and nought else,  
 You get about the best thing God invents,—  
 That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul you have missed,  
 Within yourself when you return Him thanks!  
 "Rub all out!" well, well, there's my life, in short,  
 And so the thing has gone on ever since.  
 I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds—  
 You should not take a fellow eight years old  
 And make him swear to never kiss the girls—  
 I'm my own master, paint now as I please—  
 Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!  
 Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—  
 Those great rings serve more purposes than just  
 To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!  
 And yet the old schooling sticks—the old grave eyes  
 Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,  
 The heads shake still—"It's Art's decline, my son!  
 You're not of the true painters, great and old:  
 Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find:  
 Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer.  
 Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"  
*Flower o' the pine,*  
*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!*  
 I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!  
 Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,  
 They, with their Latin? so I swallow my rage,  
 Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint  
 To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't,  
 For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come  
 A turn—some warm eve finds me at my saints—  
 A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—  
*(Flower o' the peach,*  
*Death for us all, and his own life for each!)*  
 And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs o'er.  
 The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,  
 And I do these wild things in sheer despite,

And play the fooleries you catch me at,  
 In pure rage ! the old mill-horse, out at grass  
 After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,  
 Although the miller does not preach to him  
 The only good of grass is to make chaff.  
 What would men have ? Do they like grass or no—  
 May they or mayn't they ? all I want's the thing  
 Settled for ever one way : as it is,  
 You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.  
 You don't like what you only like too much,  
 You do like what, if given you at your word,  
 You find abundantly detestable.

For me, I think I speak as I was taught—  
 I always see the Garden and God there  
 A-making man's wife—and, my lesson learned,  
 The value and significance of flesh,  
 I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward.

You understand me : I'm a beast, I know.  
 But see, now—why, I see as certainly  
 As that the morning-star's about to shine,  
 What will hap some day. We've a youngster here  
 Comes to our convent, studies what I do,  
 Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop—  
 His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—  
 They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—  
 He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,  
 I hope so—though I never live so long,  
 I know what's sure to follow. You be judge !  
 You speak no Latin more than I, belike—  
 However, you're my man, you've seen the world  
 —The beauty and the wonder and the power.  
 The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,  
 Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !  
 —For what ? do you feel thankful, ay or no,  
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,  
 The mountain round it and the sky above,  
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,  
 These are the frame to ? What's it all about ?  
 To be passed o'er, despised ? or dwelt upon,  
 Wondered at ? oh, this last of course, you say.  
 But why not do as well as say,—paint these  
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it ?  
 God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime  
 To let a truth slip. Don't object, “ His works  
 Are here already—nature is complete :  
 Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)  
 There's no advantage ! you must beat her, then.”  
 For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;  
 And so they are better, painted—better to us,  
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—  
 God uses us to help each other so,  
 Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,  
 Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,  
 And trust me but you should though! How much more,  
 If I drew higher things with the same truth!  
 That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,  
 Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh,  
 It makes me mad to see what men shall do  
 And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,  
 Nor blank—it means intensely, and means good:  
 To find its meaning is my meat and drink.  
 "Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer,"  
 Strikes in the Prior! "when your meaning's plain  
 It does not say to folks—remember matins—  
 Or, mind you fast next Friday." Why, for this  
 What need of art at all? A skull and bones,  
 Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or, what's best,  
 A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.  
 I painted a St. Laurence six months since  
 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style.  
 "How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"  
 I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—  
 "Already not one phiz of your three slaves  
 That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,  
 But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,  
 The pious people have so eased their own  
 When coming to say prayers there in a rage.  
 We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.  
 Expect another job this time next year,  
 For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—  
 Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!  
 —That is—you'll not mistake an idle word  
 Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,  
 Tasting the air this spicy night which turns  
 The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!  
 Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!  
 It's natural a poor monk out of bounds  
 Should have his apt word to excuse himself:  
 And hearken how I plot to make amends.  
 I have bethought me; I shall paint a piece  
 . . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see  
 Something in Sant' Ambrogio's . . . (bless the nuns!  
 They want a cast of my office) I shall paint  
 God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,

Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,  
 Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet  
 As puff on puff of grated orris-root  
 When ladies crowd to church at midsummer.  
 And then in the front, of course a saint or two—  
 Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,  
 Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white  
 The convent's friends and gives them a long day,  
 And Job, I must have him there past mistake,  
 The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,  
 Painters who need his patience.) Well, all these  
 Secured at their devotions, up shall come  
 Out of a corner when you least expect,  
 As one by a dark stair into a great light  
 Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—  
 Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—I'm the man!  
 Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?  
 I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,  
 My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,  
 I, in this presence, this pure company!  
 Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?  
 Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing  
 Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"  
 —Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—  
 He made you and devised you, after all,  
 Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there, draw—  
 His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?  
 We come to brother Lippo for all that,  
*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile—  
 I shuffle sideways with my blushing face  
 Under the cover of a hundred wings  
 Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay  
 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,  
 Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops  
 The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off  
 To some safe bench behind, not letting go  
 The palm of her, the little lily thing  
 That spoke the good word for me in the nick,  
 Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.  
 And so all's saved for me, and for the church  
 A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!  
 Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!  
 The street's hushed, and I know my own way back—  
 Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

## A' TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

## I.

OH, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find !  
 I can hardly misconceive you ; it would prove me deaf and  
 blind ;  
 But although I give you credit, 'tis with such a heavy mind !

## II.

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it  
 brings.  
 What, they lived once thus at Venice, where the merchants  
 were the kings,  
 Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea  
 with rings ?

## III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there ; and 'tis arched by . . .  
 what you call  
 . . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the  
 carnival !  
 I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all !

## IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm  
 in May ?  
 Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,  
 When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you  
 say ?

## V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,—  
 On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its  
 bed,  
 O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base  
 his head ?



## VI.

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd break talk off and  
 afford  
 —She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to finger on his  
 sword,  
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord ?

## VII.

What ? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished  
 sigh on sigh,  
 Told them something ? Those suspensions, those solutions—  
 “Must we die ?”  
 Those commiserating sevenths—“Life might last ! we can but  
 try !”

## VIII.

“Were you happy ?”—“Yes.”—“And are you still as happy ?”  
 —“Yes—and you ?”  
 —“Then more kisses”—“Did *I* stop them, when a million  
 seemed so few ?”  
 Hark—the dominant's persistence, till it must be answered to !

## IX.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare  
 say !  
 ‘Brave Galuppi ! that was music ! good alike at grave and  
 gay !’  
 I can always leave off talking, when I hear a master play.”

## X.

Then they left you for their pleasure : till in due time, one by  
 one,  
 Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well  
 undone,  
 Death came tacitly and took them where they never see the  
 sun.

## XI.

But when I sit down to reason,—think to take my stand nor  
 swerve  
 Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,  
 In you come with your cold music, till I creep thro' every  
 nerve.

## XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was  
burned—  
“Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice  
earned !  
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be dis-  
cerned.

## XIII.

“Yours for instance, you know physics, something of geology,  
Mathematics are your pastime ; souls shall rise in their degree ;  
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot be !

## XIV.

“As for Venice and its people, merely born to bloom and drop,  
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the  
crop.  
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop ?

## XV.

“Dust and ashes !” So you creak it, and I want the heart to  
scold.  
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all  
the gold  
Used to hang and brush their bosoms ? I feel chilly and grown  
old.

---

 BY THE FIRE-SIDE.

---

 I.

How well I know what I mean to do  
When the long dark Autumn evenings come,  
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue ?  
With the music of all thy voices, dumb  
In life's November too !

## II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,  
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,  
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,  
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,  
Not verse now, only prose!

## III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,  
"There he is at it, deep in Greek—  
Now or never, then, out we slip  
To cut from the hazels by the creek  
A mainmast for our ship."

## IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!  
Greek puts already on either side  
Such a branch-work forth, as soon extends  
To a vista opening far and wide,  
And I pass out where it ends.

## V.

The outside-frame like your hazel-trees—  
But the inside-archway narrows fast,  
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,  
And we slope to Italy at last  
And youth, by green degrees.

## VI.

I follow wherever I am led,  
Knowing so well the leader's hand—  
Oh, woman-country, wooed, not wed,  
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,  
Laid to their hearts instead!

## VII.

Look at the ruined chapel again  
Half way up in the Alpine gorge.  
Is that a tower, I point you plain,  
Or is it a mill or an iron forge  
Breaks solitude in vain?

## VIII.

'A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;  
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;  
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,  
The thread of water single and slim,  
Thro' the ravage some torrent brings !

## IX.

Does it feed the little lake below ?  
That speck of white just on its marge  
Is Pella : see, in the evening glow  
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge  
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

## X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;  
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it  
By boulder-stones where lichens mock  
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit  
Their teeth to the polished block.

## XI.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain flowers,  
And the thorny balls, each three in one,  
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers,  
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun  
These early November hours—

## XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across  
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,  
O'er a shield, else gold from rim to boss,  
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped  
Elf-needed mat of moss,

## XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged  
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew  
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged  
Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew  
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

## XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge  
That takes the turn to a range beyond,  
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge  
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond  
Danced over by the midge.

## XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,  
Blackish grey and mostly wet ;  
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.  
See here again, how the lichens fret  
And the roots of the ivy strike !

## XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes  
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,  
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,  
Gathered within that precinct small  
By the dozen ways one roams

## XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,  
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,  
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,  
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread  
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

## XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,  
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise  
Set over the porch, art's early wont—  
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,  
But has borne the weather's brunt—

## XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,  
For a pent-house properly projects  
Where three carved beams make a certain show,  
Dating—good thought of our architect's—  
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,  
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times :  
 The place is silent and aware ;•  
 It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,  
 But that is its own affair.

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,  
 Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,  
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,  
 With whom beside should I dare pursue  
 The path grey heads abhor ?

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;  
 Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—  
 Not they ; age threatens and they contemn,  
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,  
 One inch from our life's safe hem !

XXIII.

With me, youth led—I will speak now,  
 No longer watch you as you sit  
 Reading by fire-light, that great brow  
 And the spirit-small hand propping it  
 Mutely—my heart knows how—

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,  
 You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme ;  
 And you, too, find without a rebuff  
 The response your soul seeks many a time  
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff—

XXV.

My own, confirm me ! If I tread  
 This path back, is it not in pride  
 To think how little I dreamed it led  
 To an age so blest that by its side  
 Youth seems the waste instead !

## XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct !  
At first, 'twas something our two souls  
Should mix as mists do : each is sucked  
Into each now ; on, the new stream rolls,  
Whatever rocks obstruct.

## XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands  
The great Word which makes all things new—  
When earth breaks up and Heaven expands—  
How will the change strike me and you  
In the House not made with hands ?

## XXVIII.

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,  
Your heart anticipate my heart,  
You must be just before, in fine,  
See and make me see, for your part,  
New depths of the Divine !

## XXIX.

But who could have expected this,  
When we two drew together first  
Just for the obvious human bliss,  
To satisfy life's daily thirst  
With a thing men seldom miss ?

## XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,  
Let us lean and love it over again—  
Let us now forget and then recall,  
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,  
And gather what we let fall !

## XXXI.

What did I say ?—that a small bird sings  
All day long, save when a brown pair  
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings  
Strained to a bell : 'gainst the noon-day glare  
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve  
 'Tis better; then the silence grows  
 To that degree, you half believe  
 It must get rid of what it knows,  
 Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,  
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,  
 And still I questioned or replied  
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,  
 Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,  
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,  
 And care about the fresco's loss,  
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,  
 And wonder at the moss.

XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under—  
 Look through the window's grated square :  
 Nothing to see ! for fear of plunder,  
 The cross is down and the altar bare,  
 As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate,  
 See the little porch and rustic door,  
 Read duly the dead builder's date,  
 Then cross the bridge we crossed before,  
 Take the path again—but wait !

XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite !  
 The water slips o'er stock and stone ;  
 The west is tender, hardly bright.  
 How grey at once is the evening grown—  
 One star, the chrysolite !



## XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,  
 But each by each, as each knew well.  
 The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,  
 The lights and the shades made up a spell  
 Till the trouble grew and stirred.

## XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !  
 And the little less, and what worlds away !  
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,  
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,  
 And life be a proof of this !

## XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen  
 So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her.  
 I could fix her face with a guard between,  
 And find her soul as when friends confer,  
 Friends—lovers that might have been.

## XLI.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland time,  
 Wanting to sleep now over its best.  
 Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,  
 But bring to the last leaf no such test.  
 " Hold the last fast ! " says the rhyme.

## XLII.

For a chance to make your little much,  
 To gain a lover and lose a friend,  
 Venture the tree and a myriad such,  
 When nothing you mar but the year can mend !  
 But a last leaf—fear to touch.

## XLIII.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall  
 Eddying down till it find your face  
 At some slight wind—(best chance of all !)  
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place  
 You trembled to forestal !

## XLIV.

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,  
—That hair so dark and dear, how worth  
That a man should strive and agonise,  
And taste a very hell on earth  
For the hope of such a prize !

## XLV.

Oh, you might have turned and tried a man,  
Set him a space to weary and wear,  
And prove which suited more your plan,  
His best of hope or his worst despair,  
Yet end as he began.

## XLVI.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,  
And filled my empty heart at a word.  
If you join two lives, there is oft a scar,  
They are one and one, with a shadowy third ;  
One near one is too far.

## XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen  
Were hanging the night around us fast.  
But we knew that a bar was broken between  
Life and life ; we were mixed at last  
In spite of the mortal screen.

## XLVIII.

The forests had done it ; there they stood—  
We caught for a second the powers at play :  
They had mingled us so, for once and for good,  
Their work was done—we might go or stay,  
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

## XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us !  
How all we perceive and know in it  
Tends to some moment's product thus,  
When a soul declares itself—to wit,  
By its fruit—the thing it does !

## L.

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,  
It forwards the General Deed of Man,  
And each of the Many helps to recruit  
The life of the race by a general plan,  
Each living his own, to boot.

## LI.

I am named and known by that hour's feat,  
There took my station and degree.  
So grew my own small life complete  
As nature obtained her best of me—  
One born to love you, sweet !

## LII.

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now  
Back again, as you mutely sit  
Musing by fire-light, that great brow  
And the spirit-small hand propping it  
Yonder, my heart knows how !

## LIII.

So the earth has gained by one man more,  
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too,  
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er  
When the autumn comes : which I mean to do  
One day, as I said before.

---

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

---

## I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou  
Who art all truth and who dost love me now  
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—  
Should'st love so truly and could'st love me still  
A whole long life through, had but love its will,  
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay !

II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand  
 Would never let mine go, thy heart withstand  
 The beating of my heart to reach its place.  
 When should I look for thee and feel thee gone?  
 When cry for the old comfort and find none?  
 Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III.

Oh, I should fade—tis willed so! might I save,  
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave  
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.  
 It is not to be granted. But the soul  
 Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;  
 Vainly the flesh fades—soul makes all things new.

IV.

And 'twould not be because my eye grew dim  
 Thou could'st not find the love there, thanks to Him  
 Who never is dishonoured in the spark  
 He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade  
 Remember whence it sprang nor be afraid  
 While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

V.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white and clean  
 Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne  
 Alike, this body given to show it by!  
 Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,  
 What plaudits from the next world after this,  
 Could'st thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think  
 That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink  
 Although thy love was love in very deed?  
 I know that nature! Pass a festive day  
 Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away  
 Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

## VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell ;  
 If old things remain old things all is well,  
     For thou art grateful as becomes man best :  
 And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,  
 Or viewed me from a window, not so soon  
     With hee would such things fade as with the rest.

## VIII.

I seem to see ! we meet and part : 'tis brief :  
 The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,  
     The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ;  
 That is a portrait of me on the wall—  
 Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call ;  
     And for all this, one little hour's to thank.

## IX.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,  
 Because our inmost beings met and mixed,  
     Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare  
 Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,  
 " Therefore she is immortally my bride,  
     Chance cannot change that love, nor time impair.

## X.

" So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,  
 I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,  
     Look from my path when, mimicking the same,  
 The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone ?  
 —Where was it till the sunset ? where anon  
     It will be at the sunrise ! what's to blame ? "

## XI.

Is it so helpful to thee ? canst thou take  
 The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,  
     Put gently by such efforts at a beam ?  
 Is the remainder of the way so long  
 Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong ?  
     Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream !

XII.

"—Ah, but the fresher faces! Is it true,"  
 Thou'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?  
 Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth?  
 And if a man would press his lips to lips  
 Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips  
 The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?"

XIII.

"It cannot change the love kept still for Her,  
 Much more than, such a picture to prefer  
 Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.  
 The painted form takes nothing she possessed,  
 Yet while the Titian's Venus lies at rest  
 A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?"

XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,  
 My own self sell myself, my hand attach  
 Its warrant to the very thefts from me—  
 Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,  
 Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,  
 Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst  
 Away to the new faces—disentranced—  
 (Say it and think it) obdurate no more,  
 Re-issue looks and words from the old mint—  
 Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print  
 Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—  
 It all comes to the same thing at the end,  
 Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine shalt be,  
 Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum  
 Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come  
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

## XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all ?  
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,  
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?  
Why need the other women know so much  
And talk together, "Such the look and such,  
The smile he used to love with, then as now !"

## XVIII.

Might I die last and shew thee ! Should I find  
Such hardship in the few years left behind,  
If free to take and light my lamp, and go  
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit  
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it  
The better that they are so blank, I know !

## XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er  
Within my mind each look, get more and more  
By heart each word, too much to learn at first,  
And join thee all the fitter for the pause  
'Neath the low door-way's lintel. That were cause  
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst !

## XX.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two.  
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,  
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride ?  
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—  
Is it to bear ?—if easy, I'll not ask—  
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

## XXI.

Pride ?—when those eyes forestal the life behind  
The death I have to go through !—when I find,  
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee !  
What did I fear ? Thy love shall hold me fast  
Until the little minute's sleep is past  
And I wake saved.—And yet, it will not be !

## AN EPISTLE.

CONTAINING THE

STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH,  
THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

---

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,  
The not-incurious in God's handiwork  
(This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,  
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
That puff of vapour from His mouth, man's soul)  
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,  
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,  
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks  
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,  
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip  
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—  
And aptest in contrivance, under God,  
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—  
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home  
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)  
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still,  
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,  
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)  
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho,  
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art  
Shall count a little labour unrepaid ?  
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
On many a flinty furlong of this land.  
Also the country-side is all on fire  
With rumours of a marching hitherward—  
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.  
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear ;  
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls :  
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.  
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,



And once a town declared me for a spy,  
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,  
 Since this poor covert where I pass the night,  
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence  
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree  
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!  
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,  
 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip  
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.  
 A viscid choler is observable  
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,  
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure  
 Than our school wots of: there's a spider here  
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,  
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;  
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,  
 The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?  
 His service payeth me a sublimate  
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.  
 Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,  
 There set in order my experiences,  
 Gather what most deserves and give thee all—  
 Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth  
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,  
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,  
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease  
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—  
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—  
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,  
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—  
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?  
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,  
 What set me off a-writing first of all.  
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!  
 For, be it this town's barrenness—or else  
 The Man had something in the look of him—  
 His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.  
 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose  
 In the great press of novelty at hand  
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)  
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,  
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?  
 The very man is gone from me but now,  
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.  
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced  
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point,  
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days,  
 When by the exhibition of some drug  
 Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art  
 Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,  
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once  
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—  
 But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide,  
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,  
 The first conceit that entered pleased to write  
 Whatever it was minded on the wall  
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,  
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent  
 Attaineth to erase the fancy-scrawls  
 Which the returned and new-established soul  
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart  
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.  
 And first—the man's own firm conviction rests  
 That he was dead (in fact they buried him)  
 That he was dead and then restored to life  
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe :  
 —'Sayeth, the same bade " Rise," and he did rise.  
 " Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.  
 Not so this figment !—not, that such a fume,  
 Instead of giving way to time and health,  
 Should eat itself into the life of life,  
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all !  
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.  
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,  
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
 The body's habit wholly laudable,  
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
 As he were made and put aside to shew.  
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug  
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep !  
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all ?  
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.  
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,  
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,  
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,  
 Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—  
 He listened not except I spoke to him,  
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,  
 Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.  
 And that's a sample how his years must go.  
 Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,

Should find a treasure, can he use the same  
 With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,  
 And take at once to his impoverished brain  
 The sudden element that changes things,  
 —That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,  
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?  
 Is he not such an one as moves to mirth--  
 Warily parsimonious, when's no need,  
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?  
 All prudent counsel as to what befits  
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one.  
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.  
 So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge, say—  
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty--  
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,  
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven.  
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,  
 The value in proportion of all things,  
 Or whether it be little or be much.  
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments  
 Assembled to besiege his city now,  
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds--  
 'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,  
 Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze rapt  
 With stupor at its very littleness--  
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed  
 He caught prodigious import, whole results;  
 And so will turn to us the bystanders  
 In ever the same stupor (note this point,  
 That we too see not with his opened eyes!  
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,  
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.  
 Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look  
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,  
 Or pretermission of his daily craft--  
 While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child  
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,  
 Will start him to an agony of fear,  
 Exasperation, just as like! demand  
 The reason why—" 'tis but a word," object—  
 "A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord  
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,  
 Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being young  
 We both would unadvisedly recite  
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,  
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst  
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.  
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike

Thrown o'er your heads from under which ye both  
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match  
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !  
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life—  
 (It is the life to lead perforcedly) •  
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb  
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,  
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet —  
 The spiritual life around the earthly life !  
 The law of that is known to him as this—  
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.  
 So is the man perplex with impulses  
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,  
 Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong across—  
 And not along— this black thread through the blaze—  
 “ It should be ” balked by “ here it cannot be.”  
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face  
 As if he saw again and heard again  
 His sage that bade him “ Rise ” and he did rise.  
 Something—a word, a tick of the blood within  
 Admonishes— then back he sinks at once  
 To ashes, that was very fire before,  
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade  
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread—  
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,  
 Professedly the faultier that he knows  
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.  
 Indeed the especial marking of the man  
 Is prone submission to the Heavenly will—  
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.  
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last  
 For that same death which will restore his being  
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul  
 Divorced even now by premature full growth :  
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
 So long as God please, and just how God please.  
 He even seeketh not to please God more  
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.  
 Hence I perceive not he affects to preach  
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be—  
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do.  
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,  
 His own conviction ? ardent as he is—  
 Call his great truth a lie, why still the old  
 “ Be it as God please ” reassureth him.  
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should -  
 “ How, beast,” said I, “ this stolid carelessness  
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march

To stamp out like a little spark thy town,  
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once ? ”  
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me.  
 The man is apathetic, you deduce ?  
 Contrariwise he loves both old and young,  
 Able and weak—affects the very brutes  
 And birds—how say I ? flowers of the field—  
 As a wise workman recognises tools  
 In a master’s workshop, loving what they make.  
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :  
 Only impatient, let him do his best,  
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin—  
 An indignation which is promptly curbed.  
 As when in certain travels I have feigned  
 To be an ignoramus in our art  
 According to some preconceived design,  
 And happened to hear the land’s practitioners  
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,  
 Prattle fantastically on disease,  
 Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace !

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this  
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene  
 Who wrought this cure, enquiring at the source,  
 Conferring with the frankness that befits ?  
 Alas ! it grieveth me, the learned leech  
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,  
 Accused,—our learning’s fate,—of wizardry,  
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
 And creed prodigious as described to me.  
 His death which happened when the earthquake fell  
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss  
 To occult learning in our lord the sage  
 That lived there in the pyramid alone)  
 Was wrought by the mad people—that’s their wont—  
 On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,  
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—  
 How could he stop the earthquake ? That’s their way !  
 The other imputations must be lies :  
 But take one—though I loathe to give it thee,  
 In mere respect to any good man’s fame !  
 (And after all our patient Lazarus  
 Is stark mad—should we count on what he says ?  
 Perhaps not—though in writing to a leech  
 ’Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)  
 This man so cured regards the curer then,  
 As—God forgive me—who but God himself,  
 Creator and Sustainer of the world,

That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!  
 —'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,  
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,  
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,  
 And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,  
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact,  
 In hearing of this very Lazarus  
 Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?  
 Why write of trivial matters, things of price  
 Calling at every moment for remark?  
 I noticed on the margin of a pool  
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,  
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem  
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.  
 Nor I myself discern in what is writ  
 Good cause for the peculiar interest  
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.  
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness  
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus—  
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills  
 Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there came  
 A moon made like a face with certain spots  
 Multiform, manifold, and menacing:  
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met  
 In this old sleepy town at unware,  
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.  
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked  
 To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,  
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.  
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends  
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine,  
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?  
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—  
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
 Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.  
 Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,  
 But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!"  
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

## MESMERISM.

## I.

ALL I believed is true !  
I am able yet  
All I want to get  
By a method as strange as new ;  
Dare I trust the same to you ?

## II.

If at night, when doors are shut,  
And the wood-worm picks,  
And the death-watch ticks,  
And the bar has a flag of snut,  
And a cat's in the water-butt—

## III.

And the socket floats and flares,  
And the house-beams groan,  
And a foot unknown  
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,  
And the locks slip unawares—

## IV.

And the spider, to serve his ends,  
By a sudden thread,  
Arms and legs outspread,  
On the table's midst descends,  
Comes to find, God knows what friends !—

## V.

If since eve drew in, I say,  
     I have sate and brought  
     (So to speak) my thought  
 To bear on the woman away,  
 Till I felt my hair turn grey—

## VI.

Till I seemed to have and hold  
     In the vacancy  
     'Twixt the wall and me,  
 From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold  
 To the foot in its muslin fold—

## VII.

Have and hold, then and there,  
     Her, from head to foot,  
     Breathing and mute,  
 Passive and yet aware,  
 In the grasp of my steady stare—

## VIII.

Hold and have, there and then,  
     All her body and soul  
     That completes my Whole,  
 All that women add to men,  
 In the clutch of my steady ken—

## IX.

Having and holding, till  
     I imprint her fast  
     On the void at last  
 As the sun does whom he will  
 By the calotypist's skill—

## X.

Then,—if my heart's strength serve.  
     And through all and each  
     Of the veils I reach  
 To her soul and never swerve,  
 Knitting an iron nerve—



## XI.

Commanding that to advance  
And inform the shape  
Which has made escape  
And before my countenance  
Answers me glance for glance -

## XII.

I, still with a gesture fit  
Of my hands that best  
Do my soul's behest,  
Pointing the power from it,  
While myself do steadfast sit—

## XIII.

Steadfast and still the same  
On my object bent  
While the hands give vent  
To my ardour and my aim  
And break into very flame—

## XIV.

Then, I reach, I must believe,  
Not her soul in vain,  
For to me again  
It reaches, and past retrieve  
Is wound in the toils I weave—

## XV.

And must follow as I require,  
As befits a thrall,  
Bringing flesh and all,  
Essence and earth-attire,  
To the source of the tractile fire—

## XVI.

Till the house called hers, not mine,  
With a growing weight  
Seems to suffocate  
If she break not its leaden line  
And escape from its close confine—

## XVII.

Out of doors into the night !  
On to the maze  
Of the wild wood-ways,  
Not turning to left or right  
From the pathway, blind with sight—

## XVIII.

Making thro' rain and wind  
O'er the broken shrubs,  
'Twixt the stems and stubs,  
With a still composed strong mind,  
Not a care for the world behind—

## XIX.

Swifter and still more swift,  
As the crowding peace  
Doth to joy increase  
In the wide blind eyes uplift,  
Thro' the darkness and the drift !

## XX.

While I—to the shape, I too  
Feel my soul dilate  
Nor a whit abate  
And relax not a gesture due  
As I see my belief come true—

## XXI.

For there ! have I drawn or no  
Life to that lip ?  
Do my fingers dip  
In a flame which again they throw  
On the cheek that breaks a-glow ?

## XXII.

Ha ! was the hair so first ?  
What, unfileted,  
Made alive, and spread  
Through the void with a rich outburst,  
Chestnut gold-interspersed !

## XXIII.

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,  
See, on either side,  
Her two arms divide  
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,  
Take me, for I am thine '

## XXIV.

Now—now—the door is heard  
Hark ! the stairs and near --  
Nearer—and here—  
Now ! and at call the third  
She enters without a word.

## XXV.

On doth she march and on  
To the fancied shape—  
It is past escape  
Herself, now---the dream is done  
And the shadow and she are one.

## XXVI.

First I will pray. Do Thou  
That ownest the soul  
Yet wilt grant controul  
To another nor disallow  
For a time, restrain me now !

## XXVII.

I admonish me while I may,  
Not to squander guilt,  
Since require Thou wilt  
At my hand its price one day !  
What the price is, who can say ?

## A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

## I.

THAT was I, you heard last night  
 When there rose no moon at all,  
 Nor, to pierce the strained and tight  
 Tent of heaven, a planet small :  
 Life was dead, and so was light.

## II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,  
 Not a glimmer from the worm.  
 When the crickets stopped their cry,  
 When the owls forbore a term,  
 You heard music ; that was I.

## III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,  
 Sultrily suspired for proof :  
 In at heaven and out again,  
 Lightning !—where it broke the roof,  
 Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

## IV.

What they could my words expressed,  
 O my love, my all, my one !  
 Singing helped the verses best,  
 And when singing's best was done,  
 To my lute I left the rest.

## V.

So wore night ; the east was grey,  
 White the broad-faced hemlock flowers ;  
 Soon would come another day ;  
 Ere its first of heavy hours  
 Found me, I had past away.

## VI.

What became of all the hopes,  
Words and song and lute as well?  
Say, this struck you—"When life gropes  
Feebly for the path where fell  
Light last on the evening slopes.

## VII.

"One friend in that path shall be  
To secure my steps from wrong;  
One to count night day for me,  
Patient through the watches long,  
Serving most with none to see."

## VIII.

Never say—as something bodes —  
"So the worst has yet a worse!  
When life halts 'neath double loads,  
Better the task-master's curse  
Than such music on the roads!

## IX.

"When no moon succeeds the sun,  
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent  
Any star, the smallest one,  
While some drops, where lightning went,  
Show the final storm begun—

## X.

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,  
When the garden-voices fail  
In the darkness thick and hot,—  
Shall another voice avail,  
That shape be where those are not?

## XI.

"Has some plague a longer lease  
Proffering its help uncouth?  
Can't one even die in peace?  
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,  
Is that face the last one sees?"

## XII.

Oh, how dark your villa was,  
 Windows fast and obdurate !  
 How the garden grudged me grass  
 Where I stood—the iron gate  
 Ground its teeth to let me pass !

---

## MY STAR.

---

ALL that I know  
 Of a certain star,  
 Is, it can throw  
 (Like the angled spar)  
 Now a dart of red,  
 Now a dart of blue,  
 Till my friends have said  
 They would fain see, too.  
 My star that dartles the red and the blue !  
 Then it stops like a bird,—like a flower, hangs furled ;  
 They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it  
 What matter to me if their star is a world ?  
 Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I love it.

---

## INSTANS TYRANNUS.

## I.

---

OF the million or two, more or less,  
 I rule and possess,  
 One man, for some cause undefined,  
 Was least to my mind.

## II.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—  
 For, what was his force ?  
 I pinned him to earth with my weight  
 And persistence of hate—  
 And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,  
 As if lots might be worse.

## III.

“ Were the object less mean, would he stand  
 At the swing of my hand !  
 For obscurity helps him and blots  
 The hole where he squats.”  
 So I set my five wits on the stretch  
 To inveigle the wretch.  
 All in vain ! gold and jewels I threw,  
 Still he couched there perdue.  
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,  
 Hid in roses my mesh,  
 Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth—  
 Still he kept to his filth !

## IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access  
 To his heart, if I press—  
 Just a son or a mother to seize—  
 No such booty as these !  
 Were it simply a friend to pursue  
 ’Mid my million or two,  
 Who could pay me in person or pelf  
 What he owes me himself.  
 No ! I could not but smile through my chafe—  
 For the fellow lay safe  
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,  
 —Through minuteness, to wit.

## V.

Then a humor more great took its place  
 At the thought of his face,  
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,  
 The trouble uncouth  
 ’Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain  
 To put out of its pain—

And, no, I admonished myself.  
 "Is one mocked by an elf,  
 'Is one baffled by toad or by rat?  
 The gravamen's in that!  
 How the lion, who crouches to suit  
 His back to my foot,  
 Would admire that I stand in debate!  
 But the Small is the Great  
 If it vexes you,—that is the thing!  
 Toad or rat vex the King?  
 Though I waste half my realm to unearth  
 Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!"

VI.

So I soberly laid my last plan  
 To extinguish the man.  
 Round his creep-hole,—with never a break  
 Ran my fires for his sake;  
 Over-head, did my thunders combine  
 With my under-ground mine:  
 Till I looked from my labor content  
 To enjoy the event.

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?  
 Did I say "without friend?"  
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge  
 The whole sky grew his targe  
 With the sun's self for visible boss,  
 While an Arm ran across  
 Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast  
 Where the wretch was safe prest!  
 Do you see? just my vengeance complete,  
 The man sprang to his feet,  
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!  
 —So, I was afraid!



## A PRETTY WOMAN.

## I.

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,  
And the blue eye  
Dear and dewy,  
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

## II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,  
And enfold you,  
Ay, and hold you,  
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet !

## III.

You like us for a glance, you know—  
For a word's sake,  
Or a sword's sake,  
All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

## IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—  
You and youth too,  
Eyes and mouth too,  
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

## V.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—  
Sing and say for,  
Watch and pray for  
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet.

## VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,  
Though we prayed you, •  
Paid you, brayed you  
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet.

## VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there—  
Be its beauty  
Its sole duty !  
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there !

## VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,  
Who shall wonder  
That I ponder  
A conclusion ? I will try it there.

## IX.

As,—why must one, for the love forgone,  
Scout mere liking ?  
Thunder-striking  
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone !

## X.

Why with beauty, needs there money be—  
Love with liking ?  
Crush the fly-king  
In his gauze, because no honey bee ?

## XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,  
If love grew there  
'Twould undo there  
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet ?

## XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say ?  
Would you mend it  
And so end it ?  
Since not all addition perfects aye !

## XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,  
Just perfection—  
Whence, rejection  
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps ?

## XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once  
Into tinder,  
And so hinder  
Sparks from kindling all the place at once ?

## XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her ?  
Your love-fancies !—  
A sick man sees  
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her !

## XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—  
Plucks a mould-flower  
For his gold flower,  
Uses fine things that efface the rose.

## XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,  
Precious metals  
Ape the petals,—  
Last, some old king locks it up, morose !

## XVIII.

Then, how grace a rose? I know a way!  
Leave it rather.  
Must you gather?  
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

---

CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER  
CAME."

(See Edgar's Song in "LEAR.")

---

## I.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,  
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye  
Askance to watch the working of his lie  
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford  
Suppression of the glee that pursed and scored  
Its edge at one more victim gained thereby.

## II.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?  
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare  
All travellers that might find him posted there,  
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh  
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph  
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

## III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside  
Unto that ominous tract which, all agree,  
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly  
I did turn as he pointed; neither pride  
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,  
So much as gladness that some end should be.

## IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,  
 What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope  
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope  
 With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—  
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring  
 My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

## V.

As when a sick man very near to death  
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end  
 The tears and takes the farewell of each frie  
 And hears one bid the other go, draw breath  
 Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,  
 "And the blow fall'n no grieving can amend")

## VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves  
 Be room enough for this, and when a day  
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,  
 With care about the banners, scarves and staves,  
 And still the man hears all, and only craves  
 He may not shame such tender love and stay.

## VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,  
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ  
 So many times among "The Band"—to wit.  
 The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed  
 Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,  
 And all the doubt was now—should I be fit.

## VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,  
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway  
 Into the path he pointed. All the day  
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dun  
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim  
 Red leer to see the plain catch its stray

IX.

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found  
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,  
 Than pausing to throw backward a last view  
 To the safe road, 'twas gone ! grey plain all round !  
 Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.  
 I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

X.

So on I went. I think I never saw  
 Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing throve :  
 For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove !  
 But cockle, spurge, according to their law  
 Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,  
 You'd think : a burr had been a treasure-trove.

XI.

No ! penury, inertness, and grimace,  
 In some strange sort, were the land's portion. “ See  
 Or shut your eyes ”—said Nature peevishly—  
 “ It nothing skills : I cannot help my case :  
 The Judgment's fire alone can cure this place,  
 Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.”

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk  
 Above its mates, the head was chopped—the bents  
 Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents  
 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves—bruised as to baulk  
 All hope of greenness ? 'tis a brute must walk  
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair  
 In leprosy—thin dry blades pricked the mud  
 Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.  
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,  
 Stood stupefied, however he came there—  
 Thrust out past service from the devil's stud !

## XIV.

Alive? he might be dead for all I know,  
 With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,  
 And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane.  
 Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe :  
 I never saw a brute I hated so—  
 He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

## XV.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.  
 As a man calls for wine before he fights,  
 I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights  
 Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.  
 Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art :  
 One taste of the old times sets all to rights !

## XVI.

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face  
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,  
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold  
 An arm in mine to fix me to the place,  
 That way he used. Alas ! one night's disgrace !  
 Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

## XVII.

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there he stands  
 Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.  
 What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.  
 Good—but the scene shifts—faugh ! what hangman's hand  
 Pin to his breast a parchment ? his own bands  
 Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst !

## XVIII.

Better this present than a past like that—  
 Back therefore to my darkening path again.  
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.  
 Will the night send a howlet or a bat ?  
 I asked : when something on the dismal flat  
 Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX.

A sudden little river crossed my path  
 As unexpected as a serpent comes.  
 No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms—  
 This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath  
 For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath  
 Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX.

So petty yet so spiteful ! all along,  
 Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it ;  
 Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit  
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng :  
 The river which had done them all the wrong,  
 Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared  
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,  
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek  
 For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard !  
 —It may have been a water-rat I speared,  
 But, ugh ! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.  
 Now for a better country. Vain presage !  
 Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage  
 Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank  
 Soil to a plash ? toads in a poisoned tank,  
 Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.  
 What kept them there, with all the plain to choose ?  
 No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,  
 None out of it : mad brewage set to work  
 Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk  
 Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.



## XXIV.

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there !  
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,  
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel  
Men's bodies out like silk ? with all the air  
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,  
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

## XXV.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,  
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth  
Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds mirth,  
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood  
Changes and off he goes ! ) within a rood  
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

## XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,  
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's  
Broke into moss or substances like boils ;  
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him  
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim  
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

## XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end !  
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought  
To point my footstep further ! At the thought,  
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,  
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned  
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

## XXVIII.

For looking up, aware I somehow grew,  
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place  
All round to mountains—with such name to grace  
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stol'n in view.  
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you !  
How to get from them was no plainer case.

XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick  
 Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—  
 In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,  
 Progress this way. When, in the very nick  
 Of giving up, one time more, came a click  
 As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den !

XXX.

Burningly it came on me all at once,  
 This was the place ! those two hills on the right  
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight—  
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,  
 Fool, to be dozing at the very nonce,  
 After a life spent training for the sight !

XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?  
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,  
 Built of brown stone, without a counterpart  
 In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf  
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf  
 He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII.

Not see ? because of night perhaps ?—Why, day  
 Came back again for that ! before it left,  
 The dying sunset kindled through a cleft :  
 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay—  
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—  
 “ Now stab and end the creature—to the heft ! ”

XXXIII.

Not hear ? when noise was everywhere ? it tolled  
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,  
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—  
 How such a one was strong, and such was bold,  
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old  
 Lost, lost ! one moment knelled the woe of years.

## XXXIV.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides—met  
 To view the last of me, a living frame  
 For one more picture ! in a sheet of flame  
 I saw them and I knew them all. And yet  
 Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set  
 And blew. “ *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*”

## RESPECTABILITY.

## I.

DEAR, had the world in its caprice  
 Deigned to proclaim “ I know you both,  
 Have recognised your plighted troth,  
 Am sponsor for you—live in peace !”---  
 How many precious months and years  
 Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,  
 Before we found it out at last,  
 The world, and what it fears ?

## II.

How much of priceless life were spent  
 With men that every virtue decks,  
 And women models of their sex,  
 Society's true ornament,—  
 Ere we dared wander, nights like this,  
 Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,  
 And feel the Boulevard break again  
 To warmth and light and bliss ?

## III.

I know ! the world proscribes not love ;  
 Allows my finger to caress  
 Your lip's contour and downiness,  
 Provided it supply a glove.  
 The world's good word !—the Institute !  
 Guizot receives Montalembert !  
 Eh ? down the court three lamplions flare—  
 Put forward your best foot !

## A LIGHT WOMAN.

---

### I.

So far as our story approaches the end,  
Which do you pity the most of us three?—  
My friend, or the mistress of my friend  
With her wanton eyes, or me?

### II.

My friend was already too good to lose,  
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,  
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose  
And over him drew her net.

### III.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,  
A shame, said I, if she adds just him  
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,  
The hundredth, for a whim!

### IV.

And before my friend be wholly hers,  
How easy to prove to him, I said,  
An eagle's the game her pride prefers.  
Though she snaps at the wren instead!

### V.

So I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,  
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,  
And round she turned for my noble sake,  
And gave me herself indeed.

### VI.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,  
The wren is he, with his maiden face.  
—You look away and your lip is curled?  
Patience, a moment's space!

## VII.

For see—my friend goes shaking and white ;  
 He eyes me as the basilisk :  
 I have turned, it appears, his day to night,  
 Eclipsing his sun's disc.

## VIII.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief :  
 " Though I love her—that he comprehends—  
 One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)  
 And be loyal to one's friends ! "

## IX.

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame  
 As a pear hung basking over a wall ;  
 Just a touch to try and off it came ;  
 'Tis mine,—can I let it fall ?

## X.

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst !  
 Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist ?  
 'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst  
 When I gave its stalk a twist.

## XI.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see—  
 What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess.  
 What I seem to myself, do you ask of me ?  
 No hero, I confess.

## XII.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls.  
 And matter enough to save one's own.  
 Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals  
 He played with for bits of stone !

## XIII.

One likes to show the truth for the truth ;  
 That the woman was light is very true :  
 But suppose she says,—never mind that youth—  
 What wrong have I done to you ?

## XIV.

Well, any how, here the story stays,  
So far at least as I understand;  
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,  
Here's a subject made to your hand!

---

## THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
And this story of both do the townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,  
At the furthest window facing the east  
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The brides-maids' prattle around her ceased;  
She leaned forth, one on either hand;  
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—  
As one at each ear and both in a breath  
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,  
The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"  
—"A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps laid heavily  
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—  
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—  
Which vainly sought to dissemble her eyes  
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise  
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—  
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can ;  
 She looked at him, as one who awakes,—  
 The past was a sleep, and her life began.

As love so ordered for both their sakes,  
 A feast was held that selfsame night  
 In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,  
 But the Palace overshadows one,  
 Because of a crime which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done,  
 Through the first republic's murder there  
 By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)  
 Turned in the midst of his multitude  
 At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood  
 A single minute and no more,  
 While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—  
 For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,  
 As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word ?  
 If a word did pass, which I do not think,  
 Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink  
 He and his bride were alone at last  
 In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
 That the door she had passed was shut on her  
 Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,  
 Through a certain window facing the east  
 She might watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,  
 And a feast might lead to so much beside,  
 He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride—  
 "Your window and its world suffice."  
 So replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

'If I spend the night with that devil twice,  
May his window serve as my loop of hell  
Whence a damned soul looks on Paradise !

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,  
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow  
Ere I count another ave-bell.

" 'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,  
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,  
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)—  
" My father tarries to bless my state :  
I must keep it one day more for him.

" Is one day more so long to wait ?  
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know—  
We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so !  
So we resolve on a thing and sleep.  
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, " Dear or cheap  
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove  
To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,  
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,  
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled " 'Twas a very funeral  
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,  
A shame to efface, whate'er befall !

" What if we break from the Arno bowers,  
And let Petruja, cool and green,  
Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers ? "

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen  
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,  
Said, " Too much favour for me so mean !

" Alas ! my lady leaves the south.  
Each wind that comes from the Apennine  
Is a menace to her tender youth.

" No way exists, the wise opine,  
If she quits her palace twice this year,  
To avert the flower of life's decline."



Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.  
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring—  
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring  
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—  
Or I am the fool, and thou art his king!"

"Yet my passion must wait a night. nor cool—  
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,  
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.  
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,  
With its hope of my lady's countenance—

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?  
And passing her palace, if I list,  
May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed  
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,  
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,  
No morrow's sun should arise and set  
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,  
With still fresh cause to wait one more  
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,  
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,  
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,  
But not in despite of heaven and earth—  
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth  
By winter's fruits that supplant the rose:  
The world and its ways have a certain worth!

And to press a point while these oppose  
Were a simple policy—best wait,  
And lose no friends and gain no foes.

Meanwhile, worse fates than a lover's fate,  
Who daily may ride and lean and look  
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book  
Holding one picture and only one,  
Which daily to find she undertook.

When the picture was reached the book was done,  
And she turned from it all night to scheme  
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

Weeks grew months, years—gleam by gleam  
The glory dropped from youth and love,  
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream,

Which hovered as dreams do, still above,—  
But who can take a dream for truth ?  
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove !

One day as the lady saw her youth  
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked  
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—  
And wondered who the woman was,  
So hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—  
“ Summon here,” she suddenly said,  
“ Before the rest of my old self pass,

“ Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,  
Who moulds the clay no love will change,  
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“ Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange  
Arrest the remains of young and fair,  
And rivet them while the seasons range.

“ Make me a face on the window there  
Waiting as ever, mute the while,  
My love to pass below in the square !

“ And let me think that it may beguile  
Dreary days which the dead must spend  
Down in their darkness under the aisle—

“ To say,—‘ What matters at the end ?  
I did no more while my heart was warm,  
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’

“ Where is the use of the lip's red charm,  
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,  
And the blood that blues the inside arm—

Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,  
The earthly gift to an end divine ?  
A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine  
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,  
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(With, leaning out of a bright blue space,  
As a ghost might from a chink of sky,  
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eyeing ever with earnest eye  
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,  
Some one who ever passes by—)

The Duke sighed like the simplest wretch  
In Florence, "So, my dream escapes !  
Will its record stay ?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle fashioner of shapes—  
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man  
Ere his body find the grave that gapes ?

"John of Douay shall work my plan,  
Mould me on horseback here aloft,  
Alive—(the subtle artisan !)

"In the very square I cross so oft !  
That men may admire, when future suns  
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow are brave in bronzo-  
Admire and say, 'When he was alive,  
How he would take his pleasure once !'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive  
To listen meanwhile and laugh in my tomb  
At indolence which aspires to strive."

So ! while these wait the trump of doom,  
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,  
Nights and days in the narrow room ?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder  
What a gift life was, ages ago,  
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know,  
Nor all that chivalry of His,  
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss--  
 Since, the end of life being manifest,  
 He had cut his way thro' the world to this.

I hear your reproach—"But delay was best,  
 For their end was a crime!"—Oh, a crime will do  
 As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,  
 Sufficient to vindicate itself  
 And prove its worth at a moment's view.

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?  
 Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram  
 To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham.  
 As well the counter as coin, I submit,  
 When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,  
 Venture as truly, use the same skill,  
 Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play—is my principle!  
 Let a man contend to the uttermost  
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost  
 As surely as if it were lawful coin:  
 And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Was, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,  
 Though the end in sight was a crime, I say.  
 You of the virtue, (we issue join)  
 How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

---

## LOVE IN A LIFE.

---

### I.

Room after room,  
 I hunt the house through  
 We inhabit together.  
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her,  
 Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her

Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume !  
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew,—  
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

## II.

Yet the day wears,  
 And door succeeds door ;  
 I try the fresh fortune—  
 Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.  
 Still the same chance ! she goes out as I enter.  
 Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares ?  
 But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,  
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune !

## LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me ?

Never—

Beloved !

While I am I, and you are you,  
 So long as the world contains us both,  
 Me the loving and you the loth,  
 While the one eludes, must the other pursue.  
 My life is a fault at last, I fear—  
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed !  
 Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed—  
 But what if I fail of my purpose here ?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,  
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,  
 And baffled, get up to begin again,—  
 So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.  
 While, look but once from your farthest bound,  
 At me so deep in the dust and dark,  
 No sooner the old hope drops to ground  
 Than a new one, straight to the selfsame mark,  
 I shape me—  
 Ever  
 Removed !

## HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

---

I ONLY knew one poet in my life :  
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,  
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.  
His very serviceable suit of black  
Was courtly once and conscientious still,  
And many might have worn it, though none did :  
The cloak that somewhat shone and shewed the threads  
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.  
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,  
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,  
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.  
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,  
That leads no whither ; now, they breathed themselves  
On the main promenade just at the wrong time.  
You'd come upon his scrutinising hat,  
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself  
Against the single window spared some house  
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—  
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick  
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks  
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.  
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,  
The man who slices lemons into drink,  
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys  
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.  
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,  
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,  
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.  
He took such cognisance of men and things,  
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw ;  
If any cursed a woman, he took note ;  
Yet stared at nobody,—they stared at him,  
And found, less to their pleasure than surprise,  
He seemed to know them and expect as much.  
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,  
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,  
We had among us, not so much a spy,  
As a recording chief-inquisitor,  
The town's true master if the town but knew !

We merely kept a Governor for form,  
 While this man walked about and took account  
 Of all thought, said, and acted, then went home,  
 And wrote it fully to our Lord the King  
 Who has an itch to know things, He knows why,  
 And reads them in His bed-room of a night.  
 Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,  
 A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease  
 As back into your mind the man's look came—  
 Stricken in years a little,—such a brow  
 His eyes had to live under!--clear as flint  
 On either side the formidable nose  
 Curved, cut, and coloured, like an eagle's claw.  
 Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?  
 When altogether old B. disappeared  
 And young C. got his mistress,—was't our friend,  
 His letter to the King, that did it all?  
 What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?  
 Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,  
 And shifts his ministry some once a month;  
 Our city gets new Governors at whiles,—  
 But never word or sign, that I could hear,  
 Notified to this man about the streets  
 The King's approval of those letters conned  
 The last thing duly at the dead of night.  
 Did the man love his office? frowned our Lord,  
 Exhorting when none heard—"Beseech me not!  
 Too far above my people,—beneath Me!  
 I set the watch,—how should the people know?  
 Forget them, keep Me all the more in mind!"  
 Was some such understanding 'twixt the Two?

I found no truth in one report at least—  
 That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes  
 Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,  
 You found he ate his supper in a room  
 Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,  
 And twenty naked girls to change his plate!  
 Poor man, he lived another kind of life  
 In that new, stuccoed, third house by the bridge,  
 Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!  
 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,  
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,  
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid  
 (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese  
 And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,  
 Or treat of radishes in April! nine—  
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,  
 Would point him out to me a dozen times ;  
 "St—St," he'd whisper, "the Corregidor!"  
 I had been used to think that personage  
 Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,  
 And feathers like a forest in his hat,  
 Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,  
 Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,  
 And memorized the miracle in vogue!  
 He had a great observance from us boys—  
 I was in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,  
 To have just looked, when this man came to die,  
 And seen who lined the clean gay garret's sides  
 And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,  
 With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.  
 Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,  
 Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death,  
 Doing the King's work all the dim day long,  
 In his old coat, and up to his knees in mud,  
 Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,—  
 And now the day was won, relieved at once!  
 No further show or need for that old coat,  
 You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while  
 How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!  
 A second, and the angels alter that.  
 Well, I could never write a verse,—could you?  
 Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.

---

## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

---

### I.

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,  
 Since now at length my fate I know,  
 Since nothing all my love avails,  
 Since all my life seemed meant for, fails,  
 Since this was written and needs must be—  
 My whole heart rises up to bless  
 Your name in pride and thankfulness!



Take back the hope you gave,—I claim  
Only a memory of the same,  
—And this beside, if you will not blame,  
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

## II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,  
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
When pity would be softening through,  
Fixed me a breathing-while or two  
With life or death in the balance—Right !  
The blood replenished me again :  
My last thought was at least not vain.  
I and my mistress, side by side  
Shall be together, breathe and ride,  
So one day more am I deified.  
Who knows but the world may end to-night ?

## III.

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud  
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed  
By many benedictions—sun's  
And moon's and evening-star's at once—  
And so, you, looking and loving best,  
Conscious grew, your passion drew  
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too  
Down on you, near and yet more near,  
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here !—  
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear !  
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

## IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul  
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll  
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.  
Past hopes already lay behind.  
What need to strive with a life awry ?  
Had I said that, had I done this,  
So might I gain, so might I miss.  
Might she have loved me ? just as well  
She might have hated,—who can tell ?  
Where had I been now if the worst befell ?  
And here we are riding, she and I.

## V.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?  
 Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?  
 We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,  
 Saw other regions, cities new,  
     As the world rushed by on either side.  
 I thought, All labour, yet no less  
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
 Look at the end of work, contrast  
 The petty Done the Undone vast,  
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past !  
     I hoped she would love me. Here we ride.

## VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired ?  
 What heart alike conceived and dared ?  
 What act proved all its thought had been ?  
 What will but felt the fleshly screen ?  
     We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
 There's many a crown for who can reach.  
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !  
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
 A soldier's doing ! what atones ?  
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.  
     My riding is better, by their leave.

## VII.

What does it all mean, poet ? well,  
 Your brain's beat into rhythm— you tell  
 What we felt only ; you expressed  
 You hold things beautiful the best,  
     And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.  
 'Tis something, nay 'tis much—but then,  
 Have you yourself what's best for men ?  
 Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—  
 Nearer one whit your own sublime  
 Than we who never have turned a rhyme ?  
     Sing, riding's a joy ! For me, I ride.

## VIII.

And you, great sculptor—so you gave  
 A score of years to art, her slave,  
 And that's your Venus—whence we turn  
 To yonder girl that fords the burn !  
     You acquiesce and shall I repine ?

What, man of music, you, grown grey  
 With notes and nothing else to say,  
 Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
 "Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
 "But in music we know how fashions end!"  
 I gave my youth—but we ride, in fine.

## IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate  
 Proposed bliss here should sublimate  
 My being; had I signed the bond—  
 Still one must lead some life beyond,  
 —Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.  
 This foot once planted on the goal,  
 This glory-garland round my soul,  
 Could I desery such? Try and test!  
 I sink back shuddering from the quest—  
 Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best?  
 Now, Heaven and she are beyond this ride.

## X.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!  
 What if Heaven be, that, fair and strong  
 At life's best, with our eyes upturned  
 Whither life's flower is first discerned,  
 We, fixed so, ever should so abide?  
 What if we still ride on, we two,  
 With life for ever old yet new,  
 Changed not in kind but in degree,  
 The instant made eternity,—  
 And Heaven just prove that I and she  
 Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

## THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

## I.

It was roses, roses, all the way,  
 With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.  
 The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,  
 The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,  
 A year ago on this very day!

## II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,  
 The old walls rocked with the crowds and cries.  
 Had I said, "Good folks, mere noise repels—  
 But give me your sun from yonder skies!"  
 They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

## III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun,  
 To give it my loving friends to keep.  
 Nought man could do have I left undone,  
 And you see my harvest, what I reap  
 This very day, now a year is run.

## IV.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—  
 Just a palsied few at the windows set—  
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,  
 At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,  
 By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

## V.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,  
 A rope cuts both my wrists behind,  
 And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,  
 For they fling, whoever has a mind,  
 Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

## VI.

Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!  
 In such triumphs, people have dropped down dead.  
 "Thou, paid by the World,—what dost thou owe  
 Me?" God might have questioned: but now instead  
 'Tis God shall requite! I am safer so.

---

## MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

## I.

HIST, but a word, fair and soft!  
 Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!  
 Answer the question I've put you so oft—  
 What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?  
 See, we're alone in the loft,

## II.

I, the poor organist here,  
 Hugues, the composer of note—  
 Dead, though, and done with, this many a year—  
 Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,  
 Make the world prick up its ear!

## III.

See, the church empties a-pace.  
 Fast they extinguish the lights—  
 Hallo, there, sacristan! five minutes' grace!  
 Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,  
 Baulks one of holding the base.

## IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds  
 Hushing its hundreds at once,  
 Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds  
 —Oh, you may challenge them, not a response  
 Get the church saints on their rounds!

## V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt ?  
 —March, with the moon to admire,  
 Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,  
 Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,  
 Put rats and mice to the rout—

## VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just—  
 Order things back to their place,  
 Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,  
 Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament lace,  
 Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

## VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve !  
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,  
 Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve ?  
 Here's what should strike,—could one handle it cunningly  
 Help the axe, give it a helve !

## VIII.

Page after page as I played,  
 Every bar's rest where one wipes  
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed  
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes  
 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

## IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,  
 You, with brow ruled like a score,  
 Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,  
 Like two great breves as they wrote them of yore  
 Each side that bar, your straight beak !

## X.

Sure you said—" Good, the mere notes !  
 Still, couldst thou take my intent,  
 Know what procured me our Company's votes—  
 Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,  
 Parted the sheep from the goats ! "

## XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch i  
 Quick, ere my candle's a snuff  
 --Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—  
*I* believe in you, but that's not enough.  
 Give my conviction a clinch !

## XII.

First you deliver your phrase  
 —Nothing propound, that I see,  
 Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—  
 Answered no less, where no answer needs be :  
 Off start the Two on their ways !

## XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,  
 Volunteer needlessly help—  
 In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose.  
 So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,  
 Argument's hot to the close !

## XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid—  
 Two must discept,—has distinguished !  
 Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did :  
 Four protests, Five makes a dart at the thing wished—  
 Back to One, goes the case bandied !

## XV.

One says his say with a difference—  
 More of expounding, explaining !  
 All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance—  
 Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restraining—  
 Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

## XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive—  
 Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant—  
 Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive—  
 Four overbears them all. strident and strepitant—  
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

## XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars—

Now, they prick pins at a tissue  
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's

Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?  
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

## XVIII.

*Est fuga, volvitur rota!*

On we drift. Where looms the dim port?  
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota—  
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—  
Show it us—Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

## XIX.

What with affirming, denying,

Holding, risposting, subjoining,  
All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm trying . .

There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining  
Under those spider-webs lying

## XX.

So your fugue broadens and thickens,

Greatens and deepens and lengthens,  
Till one exclaims—"But where's music, the dickens?"  
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens  
Blackened to the stoutest of tickens?"

## XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous.

Prove me such censure's unfounded!  
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—

Hopes 'twas for something his organ-pipes sounded  
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

## XXII.

Is it your moral of Life?

Such a web, simple and subtle,  
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,  
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,  
Death ending all with a knife?



## XXIII.

Over our heads Truth and Nature—  
 Still our life's zigzags and dodges,  
 Ins and outs weaving a new legislature—  
 God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,  
 Palled beneath Man's usurpature !

## XXIV.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,  
 Cherub and trophy and garland.  
 Nothings grow something which quietly closes  
 Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse of the far land  
 Gets through our comments and glozes.

## XXV.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,  
 (Say we and make up a visage)  
 So many men with such various intentions  
 Down the past ages must know more than this age !  
 Leave the web all its dimensions !

## XXVI.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf ?  
 Proved a mere mountain in labour ?  
 Better submit—try again—what's the clef ?  
 'Faith, it's no trifle for pipe and for tabor—  
 Four flats—the minor in F.

## XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.  
 Learning it once, who would lose it ?  
 Yet all the while a misgiving will linger—  
 Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it—  
 Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her !

## XXVIII.

Hugues ! I advise *mei pœnâ*  
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)  
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena !  
 Say the word, straight I unstop the Full-Organ,  
 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

## XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there—  
 . . . Lo, you, the wick in the socket !  
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there !  
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket !  
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,  
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,  
 And find a poor devil at end of his cares  
 At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-riddled stairs ?  
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket ?

---

## BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine ? then we'll push back chairs and talk.  
 A final glass for me, tho' : cool, i'faith !  
 We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.  
 It's different, preaching in basilicas,  
 And doing duty in some masterpiece  
 Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart !  
 I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes,  
 Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere ;  
 It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln : eh ?  
 These hot long ceremonies of our church  
 Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,  
 You take me—amply pay it ! Now, we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.  
 No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir !  
 Beside 'tis our engagement : don't you know,  
 I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,  
 We'd see truth dawn together ?—truth that peeps  
 Over the glass's edge when dinner's done,  
 And body gets its sop and holds its noise  
 And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time—  
 'Tis break of day ! You do despise me then.  
 And if I say, “despise me,”—never fear—  
 I know you do not in a certain sense—  
 Not in my arm-chair for example : here,  
 I well imagine you respect my place  
 (Status, *entourage*, worldly circumstance)

Quite to its value—very much indeed  
 —Are up to the protesting eyes of you  
 In pride at being seated here for once—  
 You'll turn it to such capital account !  
 When somebody, through years and years to come,  
 Hints of the bishop,—names me—that's enough—  
 "Blougram ? I knew him"—(into it you slide)  
 "Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,  
 All alone, we too—he's a clever man—  
 And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—  
 Oh, there was wine, and good !—what with the wine . . .  
 'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk !  
 He's no bad fellow, Blougram—he had seen  
 Something of mine he relished—some review—  
 He's quite above their humbug in his heart,  
 Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade—  
 I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times—  
 How otherwise ? I liked him, I confess !"  
*Che ch'è*, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,  
 Don't you protest now ! It's fair give and take ;  
 You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths—  
 The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays—  
 You do despise me ; your ideal of life  
 Is not the bishop's—you would not be I—  
 You would like better to be Goethe, now,  
 Or Buonaparte—or, bless me, lower still,  
 Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred,  
 Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,  
 Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,  
 So long as on that point, whate'er it was,  
 You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.  
 —That, my ideal never can include,  
 Upon that element of truth and worth  
 Never be based ! for say they make me Pope  
 (They can't—suppose it for our argument)  
 Why, there I'm at my tether's end—I've reached  
 My height, and not a height which pleases you.  
 An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.  
 It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,  
 Of how some actor played Death on a stage  
 With pasteboard crown, sham orb, and tinselled dart,  
 And called himself the monarch of the world,  
 Then going in the tire-room afterward  
 Because the play was done, to shift himself,  
 Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly  
 The moment he had shut the closet door

By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope  
 At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,  
 And whose part he presumed to play just now ?  
 Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true !

So, drawing comfortable breath again,  
 You weigh and find whatever more or less  
 I boast of my ideal realised  
 Is nothing in the balance when opposed  
 To your ideal, your grand simple life,  
 Of which you will not realise one jot.  
 I am much, you are nothing ; you would be all,  
 I would be merely much—you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me,—hearken why.  
 The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,  
 Is not to fancy what were fair in life  
 Provided it could be,—but, finding first  
 What may be, then find how to make it fair  
 Up to our means—a very different thing !  
 No abstract intellectual plan of life  
 Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,  
 But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,  
 May lead within a world which (by your leave)  
 Is Rome or London—not Fool's-paradise.  
 Embellish Rome, idealise away,  
 Make Paradise of London if you can,  
 You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile !

We mortals cross the ocean of this world  
 • Each in his average cabin of a life—  
 The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.  
 Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare ?  
 You come on shipboard with a landsman's list  
 Of things he calls convenient—so they are !  
 An India screen is pretty furniture,  
 A piano-forte is a fine resource,  
 All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,  
 The new edition fifty volumes long ;  
 And little Greek books with the funny type  
 They get up well at Leipsic fill the next—  
 Go on ! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes !  
 And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add !  
 'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow  
 Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,  
 Since he more than the others brings with him  
 Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese !

Yet 'twas not on your list before, perhaps.  
 Alas! friend, here's the agent . . . is't the name?  
 The captain, or whoever's master here—  
 You see him screw his face up; what's his cry  
 Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet square!"  
 If you won't understand what six feet mean,  
 Compute and purchase stores accordingly—  
 And if in pique because he overhauls  
 Your Jerome, piano and bath, you come on board  
 Bare—why you cut a figure at the first  
 While sympathetic landsmen see you off;  
 Not afterwards, when, long ere half seas o'er,  
 You peep up from your utterly naked boards  
 Into some snug and well-appointed berth  
 Like mine, for instance (try the cooler jug—  
 Put back the other, but don't jog the ice),  
 And mortified you mutter "Well and good—  
 He sits enjoying his sea-furniture—  
 'Tis stout and proper, and there's store of it,  
 Though I've the better notion, all agree,  
 Of fitting rooms up! hang the carpenter,  
 Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances—  
 I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!"  
 And meantime you bring nothing: never mind—  
 You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't,  
 You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the starting place.  
 See my way: we're two college friends, suppose—  
 Prepare together for our voyage, then,  
 Each note and check the other in his work,—  
 Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticise!  
 What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why, first, you don't believe, you don't and can't.  
 (Not stately, that is, and fixedly  
 And absolutely and exclusively)  
 In any revelation called divine.  
 No dogmas nail your faith—and what remains  
 But say so, like the honest man you are?  
 First, therefore, overhaul theology!  
 Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,  
 Must find believing every whit as hard,  
 And if I do not frankly say as much,  
 The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now, wait, my friend: well, I do not believe—  
 If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,

Absolute and exclusive, as you say.  
 (You're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time)  
 Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie  
 I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,  
 So give up hope accordingly to solve—  
 (To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then  
 With both of us, tho' in unlike degree,  
 Missing full credence—overboard with them!  
 I mean to meet you on your own premise—  
 Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,  
 Calm and complete, determinately fixed  
 To-day, to-morrow, and for ever, pray?  
 You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think.  
 In no-wise! all we've gained is, that belief,  
 As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,  
 Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's  
 The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,  
 Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.  
 Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,  
 A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,  
 A chorus-ending from Euripides,—  
 And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears  
 As old and new at once as Nature's self,  
 To rap and knock and enter in our soul,  
 Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,  
 Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—  
 The grand Perhaps! we look on helplessly,—  
 There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—  
 This good God,—what he could do, if he would,  
 Would, if he could—then must have done long since:  
 If so, when, where, and how? some way must be,—  
 Once feel about, and soon or late you hit  
 Some sense, in which it might be, after all.  
 Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

—That way

Over the mountain, which who stands upon  
 Is apt to doubt if it's indeed a road;  
 While if he views it from the waste itself,  
 Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,  
 Not vague, mistakeable! what's a break or two  
 Seen from the unbroken desert either side?  
 And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)  
 What if the breaks themselves should prove at last  
 The most consummate of contrivances  
 To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith,—

And so we stumble at truth's very test ?  
 What have we gained then by our unbelief  
 But a life of doubt diversified by faith,  
 For one of faith diversified by doubt.  
 We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

“ Well,” you rejoin, “ the end's no worse, at least,  
 We've reason for both colours on the board.  
 Why not confess, then, where I drop the faith?  
 And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you ? ”

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,  
 And both things even,—faith and unbelief  
 Left to a man's choice,—we'll proceed a step,  
 Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's—  
 The man made for the special life of the world—  
 Do you forget him ? I remember though !  
 Consult our ship's conditions and you find  
 One and but one choice suitable to all,  
 The choice that you unluckily prefer  
 Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it  
 Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief  
 Bears upon life, determines its whole course,  
 Begins at its beginning. See the world  
 Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I ;  
 I mean to take it as it is,—and you  
 Not so you'll take it,—though you get nought else  
 I know the special kind of life I like,  
 What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,  
 Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit  
 In power, peace, pleasantness, and length of days  
 I find that positive belief does this  
 For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.  
 —For you, it does, however—that we'll try !  
 'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least  
 Induce the world to let me peaceably,  
 Without declaring at the outset, “ Friends,  
 I absolutely and peremptorily  
 Believe ! ”—I say faith is my waking life.  
 One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,  
 We know, but waking's the main point with us,  
 And my provision's for life's waking part.  
 Accordingly, I use heart, head and hands  
 All day, I build, scheme, study and make friends  
 And when night overtakes me, down I lie,  
 Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,  
 The sooner the better, to begin afresh.

What's midnight's doubt before the dayspring's faith?  
 You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,  
 That recognise the night, give dreams their weight—  
 To be consistent you should keep your bed,  
 Abstain from healthy acts that prove you a man,  
 For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!  
 And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream,  
 Live through the day and bustle as you please.  
 And so you live to sleep as I to wake,  
 To unbelieve as I to still believe?  
 Well, and the common sense of the world calls you  
 Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me.  
 Its estimation, which is half the fight,  
 That's the first cabin-comfort I secure—  
 The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye!  
 Come, come, it's best believing, if we can—  
 You can't but own that.

Next, concede again—

If once we choose belief, on all accounts  
 We can't be too decisive in our faith,  
 Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,  
 To suit the world which gives us the good things.  
 In every man's career are certain points  
 Whereon he dares not be indifferent;  
 The world detects him clearly, if he is,  
 As baffled at the game, and losing life.  
 He may care little or he may care much  
 For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,  
 Since various theories of life and life's  
 Success are extant which might easily  
 Comport with either estimate of these,  
 • And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,  
 Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool  
 Because his fellows would choose otherwise.  
 We let him choose upon his own account  
 So long as he's consistent with his choice.  
 But certain points, left wholly to himself,  
 When once a man has arbitrated on,  
 We say he must succeed there or go hang.  
 Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most  
 Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—  
 For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch  
 Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,  
 The form of faith his conscience holds the best,  
 Whate'er the process of conviction was.  
 For nothing can compensate his mistake  
 On such a point, the man himself being judge—  
 He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.



Well now—there's one great form of Christian faith  
 I happened to be born in—which to teach  
 Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,  
 As best and readiest means of living by ;  
 The same on examination being proved  
 The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise  
 And absolute form of faith in the whole world—  
 Accordingly, most potent of all forms  
 For working on the world. Observe, my friend,  
 Such as you know me, I am free to say,  
 In these hard latter days which hamper one,  
 Myself, by no immoderate exercise  
 Of intellect and learning, and the tact  
 To let external forces work for me,  
 Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread,  
 Bid Peter's creed, or, rather, Hildebrand's,  
 Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world  
 And make my life an ease and joy and pride,  
 It does so,—which for me's a great point gained,  
 Who have a soul and body that exact  
 A comfortable care in many ways.  
 There's power in me and will to dominate  
 Which I must exercise, they hurt me else :  
 In many ways I need mankind's respect,  
 Obedience, and the love that's born of fear :  
 While at the same time, there's a taste I have,  
 A toy of soul, a titillating thing,  
 Refuses to digest these dainties crude.  
 The naked life is gross till clothed upon :  
 I must take what men offer, with a grace  
 As though I would not, could I help it, take !  
 A uniform to wear though over-rich—  
 Something imposed on me, no choice of mine ;  
 No fancy-dress worn for pure fashion's sake  
 And despicable therefore ! now men kneel  
 And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand.  
 Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,  
 And thus that it should be I have procured ;  
 And thus it could not be another way,  
 I venture to imagine.

You'll reply—

So far my choice, no doubt, is a success ;  
 But were I made of better elements,  
 With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,  
 I hardly would account the thing success  
 Though it do all for me I say.

But, friend,

We speak of what is—not of what might be,  
And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.  
I am the man you see here plain enough—  
Grant I'm a beast, why beasts must lead beasts' lives !  
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws—  
The tailless man exceeds me ; but being tailed  
I'll lash out lion-fashion, and leave apes  
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.  
My business is not to remake myself,  
But make the absolute best of what G<sup>o</sup>d made.  
Or—our first simile—though you proved me doomed  
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,  
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive  
To make what use of each were possible :  
And as this cabin gets upholstery,  
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast  
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes  
Enumerated so complacently,  
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find  
In this particular life I choose to lead  
No fit provision for them. Can you not ?  
Say you, my fault is I address myself  
To grosser estimators than I need,  
And that's no way of holding up the soul—  
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows  
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools',—  
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that ?  
I pine among my million imbeciles  
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense  
Eye me and know me, whether I believe  
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,  
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her,  
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,  
Withhold their voices though I look their way :  
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end  
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what's its name ?)  
While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang  
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,  
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths  
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—  
For even your prime men who appraise their kind  
Are men still, catch a thing within a thing,  
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,

Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street  
 Sixty the minute ; what's to note in that ?  
 You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack ;  
 Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands !  
 Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.  
 The honest thief, the tender murderer,  
 The superstitious atheist, demireps  
 That love and save their souls in new French books—  
 We watch while these in equilibrium keep  
 The giddy line midway : one step aside,  
 They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line  
 Before your sages,—just the men to shrink  
 From the gross weights, coarse scales, and labels broad  
 You offer their refinement. Fool or knave ?  
 Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave  
 When there's a thousand diamond weights between ?  
 So I enlist them. Your picked Twelve, you'll find,  
 Profess themselves indignant, scandalised  
 At thus being held unable to explain  
 How a superior man who disbelieves  
 May not believe as well : that's Schelling's way !  
 It's through my coming in the tail of time,  
 Nicking the minute with a happy tact.  
 Had I been born three hundred years ago  
 They'd say, " What's strange ? Blougram of course  
                   believes ; "  
 And, seventy years since, " disbelieves of course."  
 But now, " He may believe ; and yet, and yet  
 How can he ? "—All eyes turn with interest.  
 Whereas, step off the line on either side—  
 You, for example, clever to a fault,  
 The rough and ready man that write apace,  
 Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—  
 You disbelieve ! Who wonders and who cares ?  
 Lord So-and-So—his coat bedropt with wax,  
 All Peter's chains about his waist, his back  
 Brave with the needlework of Noodledom,  
 Believes ! Again, who wonders and who cares ?  
 But I, the man of sense and learning too,  
 The able to think yet act, the this, the that,  
 I, to believe at this late time of day !  
 Enough ; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it's yours ! admire me as these may,  
 You don't. But what at least do you admire ?  
 Present your own perfections, your ideal,  
 Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste !  
 Is it Napoleon you would have us grow ?

Concede the means ; allow his head and hand,  
 (A large concession, clever as you are)  
 Good !—In our common primal element  
 Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know—  
 We're still at that admission, recollect)  
 Where do you find—apart from, towering-o'er  
 The secondary temporary aims  
 Which satisfy the gross tastes you despise—  
 Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust  
 God knows through what or in what ? it's alive  
 And shines and leads him and that's all we want.  
 Have we aught in our sober night shall point  
 Such ends as his were, and direct the means  
 Of working out our purpose straight as his,  
 Nor bring a moment's trouble on success  
 With after-care to justify the same ?  
 —Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve !  
 Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light away.  
 What's the vague good of the world for which you'd dare  
 With comfort to yourself blow millions up ?  
 We neither of us see it ! we do see  
 The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains  
 And writhing of their bowels and so forth,  
 In that bewildering entanglement  
 Of horrible eventualities  
 Past calculation to the end of time !  
 Can I mistake for some clear word of God  
 (Which were my ample warrant for it all)  
 His puff of hazy instincts, idle talk,  
 "The state, that's I," quack-nonsense about kings,  
 And (when one beats the man to his last hold)  
 The vague idea of setting things to rights,  
 Policing people efficaciously,  
 More to their profit, most of all to his own ;  
 The whole to end that dimmest of ends  
 By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the church,  
 And resurrection of the old *régime*.  
 Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,  
 Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such ?  
 No : for, concede me but the merest chance  
 Doubt may be wrong—there's judgment, life to come !  
 With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right ?  
 This present life is all ? you offer me  
 Its dozen noisy years with not a chance  
 That wedding an Arch-Duchess, wearing lace,  
 And getting called by divers new-coined names,  
 Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,

Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like !  
Therefore, I will not.

Take another case ;  
Fit up the cabin yet another way.  
What say ye to the poet's ? shall we write  
Hamlets, Othellos—make the world our own,  
Without a risk to run of either sort ?  
I can't !—to put the strongest reason first.  
“ But try,” you urge, “ the trying shall suffice :  
The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life.  
Try to be Shakspeare, leave the rest to fate ! ”  
Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me ?  
If I prefer remaining my poor self,  
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.  
If I'm a Shakspeare, let the well alone—  
Why should I try to be what now I am ?  
If I'm no Shakspeare, as too probable,—  
His power and consciousness and self-delight  
And all we want in common, shall I find—  
Trying for ever ? while on points of taste  
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I  
Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he,  
Which in our two lives realises most ?  
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.  
He had the imagination ; stick to that !  
Let him say “ In the face of my soul's works  
Your world is worthless and I touch it not  
Lest I should wrong them ”—I withdraw my plea.  
But does he say so ? look upon his life !  
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.  
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces  
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town ;  
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,  
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute ;  
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,  
And none more, had he seen its entry once,  
Than “ Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal.”  
Why then should I who play that personage,  
The very Pandulph Shakspeare's fancy made,  
Be told that had the poet chanced to start  
From where I stand now (some degree like mine  
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)  
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,  
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays ?  
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best !  
Did Shakspeare live, he could but sit at home

And get himself in dreams the Vatican,  
 Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,  
 And English books, none equal to his own,  
 Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did.)  
 —Terni and Naples' bay and Gothard's top—  
 Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these—  
 But, as I pour this claret, there they are—  
 I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July  
 With ten mules to the carriage and a bed  
 Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that?  
 We want the same things, Shakspeare and myself,  
 And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,  
 Could fancy he too had it when he liked,  
 But not so thoroughly that if fate allowed  
 He would not have it also in my sense.  
 We play one game. I send the ball aloft  
 No less adroitly that of fifty strokes  
 Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high  
 Which sends them back to me: I wish and get.  
 He struck balls higher and with better skill,  
 But at a poor fence level with his head,  
 And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms,  
 Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—  
 While I receive heaven's incense in my nose  
 And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.  
 Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.  
 Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;  
 Only, we can't command it; fire and life  
 Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:  
 And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,  
 The fact's the same,—belief's fire once in us,  
 Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself.  
 We penetrate our life with such a glow  
 As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,  
 That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power  
 For good or ill, since men call flare success.  
 But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.  
 Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!  
 Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,  
 Incomparably better than my own.  
 He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,  
 Sets up God's rule again by simple means,  
 Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.  
 He flared out in the flaring of mankind;  
 Such Luther's luck was—how shall such be mine?  
 If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:

And if he did not altogether—well,  
 Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be  
 I might be also. But to what result ?  
 He looks upon no future : Luther did.  
 What can I gain on the denying side ?  
 Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,  
 Read the text right, emancipate the world—  
 The emancipated world enjoys itself  
 With scarce a thank-you—Blougram told it first  
 It could not owe a farthing,—not to him  
 More than St. Paul ! 'twould press its pay, you think ?  
 Then add there's still that plaguey hundredth chance  
 Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—  
 For what gain ? not for Luther's, who secured  
 A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,  
 Supposing death a little altered things !

"Ay, but since really I lack faith," you cry,  
 "I run the same risk really on all sides,  
 In cool indifference as bold unbelief.  
 As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.  
 It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,  
 Nor more available to do faith's work  
 Than unbelief like yours. Whole faith, or none !"

Softly, my friend ! I must dispute that point.  
 Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith  
 We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith :  
 I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.  
 The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,  
 If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does ?  
 By life and man's free will, God gave for that !  
 To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice :  
 That's our one act, the previous work's His own.  
 You criticise the soil ? it reared this tree—  
 This broad life and whatever fruit it bears !  
 What matter though I doubt at every pore,  
 Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,  
 Doubts in the trivial work of every day,  
 Doubts at the very bases of my soul  
 In the grand moments when she probes herself—  
 If finally I have a life to show,  
 The thing I did, brought out in evidence  
 Against the thing done to me underground  
 By Hell and all its brood, for aught I know ?  
 I say, whence sprang this ? shows it faith or doubt ?  
 All's doubt in me ; where's break of faith in this ?  
 It is the idea, the feeling and the love  
 God means mankind should strive for and show forth,

Whatever be the process, to that end,—  
 And not historic knowledge, logic sound,  
 And metaphysical acumen, sure!  
 "What think ye of Christ," friend? when all's done and said,  
 You like this Christianity or not?  
 It may be false, but will you wish it true?  
 Has it your vote to be so if it can?  
 Trust you an instinct silenced long ago  
 That will break silence and enjoin you love  
 What mortified philosophy is hoarse,  
 And all in vain, with bidding you despise?  
 If you desire faith—then you've faith enough.  
 What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves?  
 You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,  
 On hearsay; it's a favourable one:  
 "But still," (you add) "there was no such good man,  
 Because of contradictions in the facts.  
 One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,  
 This Blougram—yet throughout the tales of him  
 I see he figures as an Englishman."

Well, the two things are reconcileable.  
 But would I rather you discovered that,  
 Subjoining—"Still, what matter though they be?  
 Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask  
 Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,  
 Omniscient, Omnipresent, scars too much  
 The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.  
 It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.  
 Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth:  
 I say, it's meant to hide him all it can,  
 And that's what all the blessed Evil's for.  
 Its use in time is to environ us,  
 Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough  
 Against that sight till we can bear its stress.  
 Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain  
 And lidless eye and disenprisoned heart  
 Less certainly would wither up at once  
 Than mind, confronted with the truth of Him.  
 But time and earth case-harden us to live;  
 The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child  
 Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,  
 Plays on and grows to be a man like us.  
 With me, faith means perpetual unbelief  
 Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot  
 Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.  
 Or, if that's too ambitious,—here's my box—



I need the excitement of a pinch  
 Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose  
 Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.  
 "Leave it in peace"—advise the simple folk—  
 Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,  
 Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith!

You'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,  
 In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.  
 How you'd exult if I could put you back  
 Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,  
 Geology, ethnology, what not,  
 (Greek endings with the little passing-bell  
 That signifies some faith's about to die)  
 And set you square with Genesis again,—  
 When such a traveller told you his last news,  
 He saw the ark a-top of Ararat  
 But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk  
 And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!  
 How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,  
 How act? As other people felt and did;  
 With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,  
 Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate  
 Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be!

No, when the fight begins within himself,  
 A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,  
 Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—  
 He's left, himself, in the middle: the soul wakes  
 And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!  
 Never leave growing till the life to come!  
 Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks  
 That used to puzzle people wholesomely—  
 Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.  
 What are the laws of Nature, not to bend  
 If the Church bid them, brother Newman asks.  
 Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—  
 On to the rack with faith—is my advice!  
 Will not that hurry us upon our knees  
 Knocking our breasts, "It can't be—yet it shall!  
 Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?  
 Low things confound the high things!" and so forth.  
 That's better than acquitting God with grace  
 As some folks do. He's tried—no case is proved,  
 Philosophy is lenient—He may go!

You'll say—the old system's not so obsolete  
 But men believe still: ay, but who and where?

King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet  
 The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes ;  
 But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint  
 Believes God watches him continually,  
 As he believes in fire that it will burn,  
 Or rain that it will drench him ? Break fire's law,  
 Sin against rain, although the penalty  
 Be just a singe or soaking ? No, he smiles ;  
 Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves.

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,  
 My faith's the greater—then my faith's enough.  
 I have read much, thought much, experienced much,  
 Yet would die rather than avow my fear  
 The Naples' liquefaction may be false,  
 When set to happen by the palace-clock  
 According to the clouds or dinner-time.  
 I hear you recommend, I might at least  
 Eliminate, declassify my faith  
 Since I adopt it ; keeping what I must  
 And leaving what I can—such points as this !  
 I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.  
 Supposing there's no truth in what I said  
 About the need of trials to man's faith,  
 Still, when you bid me purify the same,  
 To such a process I discern no end,  
 Clearing off one excrescence to see two ;  
 There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,  
 That meets the knife—I cut and cut again !  
 First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last  
 But Fichte's clever cut at God himself ?  
 •Experimentalize on sacred things ?  
 I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain  
 To stop betimes : they all get drunk alike.  
 The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste  
 As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,  
 Nor see more danger in it, you retort.  
 Your taste's worth mine ; but my taste proves more wise  
 When we consider that the steadfast hold  
 On the extreme end of the chain of faith  
 Gives all the advantage, makes the difference,  
 With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule.  
 We are their lords, or they are free of us  
 Just as we tighten or relax that hold.  
 So, other matters equal, we'll revert  
 To the first problem—which if solved my way

And thrown into the balance turns the scale—  
 How we may lead a comfortable life,  
 How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time  
 How narrowly and grossly I view life,  
 Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule  
 The masses, and regard complacently  
 "The cabin," in our old phrase! Well, I do.  
 I act for, talk for, live for this world now,  
 As this world calls for action, life and talk—  
 No prejudice to what next world may prove,  
 Whose new laws and requirements my best pledge  
 To observe then, is that I observe these now,  
 Doing hereafter what I do meanwhile.  
 Let us concede (gratuitously though)  
 Next life relieves the soul of body, yields  
 Pure spiritual enjoyments: well, my friend,  
 Why lose this life in the meantime, since its use  
 May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream  
 (Work it up in your next month's article)  
 Of man's poor spirit in its progress still  
 Losing true life for ever and a day  
 Through ever trying to be and ever being  
 In the evolution of successive spheres,  
 Before its actual sphere and place of life,  
 Half way into the next, which having reached,  
 It shoots with corresponding foolery  
 Half way into the next still, on and off!  
 As when a traveller, bound from north to south,  
 Scouts fur in Russia—what's its use in France?  
 In France spurns flannel—where's its need in Spain?  
 In Spain drops cloth—too cumbrous for Algiers!  
 Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,  
 A superfluity at Timbuctoo.  
 When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?  
 I'm at ease now, friend—worldly in this world  
 I take and like its way of life; I think  
 My brothers who administer the means  
 Live better for my comfort—that's good too;  
 And God, if he pronounce upon it all,  
 Approves my service, which is better still.  
 If He keep silence,—why for you or me  
 Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times,"  
 What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue—you declare,  
 All special-pleading done with, truth is truth,  
 And justifies itself by undreamed ways.  
 You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,  
 To say so, acting up to our truth perceived  
 However feebly. Do then,—act away !  
 'Tis there I'm on the watch for you ! How one acts  
 Is, both of us agree, our chief concern :  
 And how you'll act is what I fain would see  
 If, like the candid person you appear,  
 You dare to make the most of your life's scheme  
 As I of mine, live up to its full law  
 Since there's no higher law that counterchecks.  
 Put natural religion to the test  
 You've just demolished the revealed with—quick,  
 Down to the root of all that checks your will,  
 All prohibition to lie, kill, and thief  
 Or even to be an atheistic priest !  
 Suppose a pricking to incontinence—  
 Philosophers deduce your chastity  
 Or shame, from just the fact that at the first  
 Whoso embraced a woman in the plain,  
 Threw club down, and forewent his brains beside,  
 So stood a ready victim in the reach  
 Of any brother-savage club in hand—  
 Hence saw the use of going out of sight  
 In wood or cave to prosecute his loves—  
 I read this in a French book t'other day.  
 Does law so analyzed coerce you much ?  
 Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,  
 But you who reach where the first thread begins,  
 You'll soon cut that !—which means you can, but won't  
 Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,  
 You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,  
 But there they are, and so you let them rule.  
 Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,  
 A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,  
 Without the good the slave expects to get,  
 Suppose he has a master after all !  
 You own your instincts—why what else do I,  
 Who want, am made for, and must have a God  
 Ere I can be aught, do aught ?—no mere name  
 Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,  
 To wit, a relation from that thing to me,  
 Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,  
 And with it take the rest, this life of ours !  
 I live my life here ; yours you dare not live,

Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)  
 Disfigure such a life and call it names,  
 While, in your mind, remains another way  
 For simple men : knowledge and power have rights,  
 But ignorance and weakness have rights too.  
 There needs no crucial effort to find truth  
 If here or there or anywhere about—  
 We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,  
 And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least  
 The right, by one laborious proof the more,  
 To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.  
 Men are not gods, but, properly, are brutes.  
 Something we may see, all we cannot see—  
 What need of lying ? I say, I see all,  
 And swear to each detail the most minute  
 In what I think a man's face—you, mere cloud :  
 I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,  
 For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,  
 Mankind may doubt if there's a cloud at all.  
 You take the simpler life—ready to see,  
 Willing to see—for no cloud's worth a face—  
 And leaving quiet what no strength can move,  
 And which, who bids you move ? who has the right ?  
 I bid you ; but you are God's sheep, not mine—  
 "*Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find  
 In these the pleasant pastures of this life  
 Much you may eat without the least offence,  
 Much you don't eat because your maw objects,  
 Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock  
 Open great eyes at you and even butt,  
 And thereupon you like your friends so much  
 You cannot please yourself, offending them—  
 Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,  
 You weigh your pleasure with their butts and kicks  
 And strike the balance. Sometimes certain tears  
 Restrain you—real checks since you find them so—  
 Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks ;  
 And thus you graze through life with not one lie,  
 And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name ?  
 If so, you beat—which means—you are not I—  
 Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill  
 Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,  
 But motioned to the velvet of the sward  
 By those obsequious wethers' very selves.  
 Look at me, sir ; my age is double yours.  
 At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,

What now I should be,—as, permit the word,  
 I pretty well imagine your whole range  
 And stretch of tether twenty years to come.  
 We both have minds and bodies much alike.  
 In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric.  
 My daily bread, my influence and my state?  
 You're young, I'm old, you must be old one day;  
 Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,  
 Women their lovers kneel to, that cut curls  
 From your fat lap-dog's ears to grace a brooch—  
 Dukes, that petition just to kiss your ring—  
 With much beside you know or may conceive?  
 Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,  
 Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,  
 While writing all the same my articles  
 On music, poetry, the fictile vase  
 Found at Albano, or Anacreon's Greek.  
 But you—the highest honour in your life  
 The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days,  
 Is—dining here and drinking this last glass  
 I pour you out in sign of amity  
 Before we part for ever. Of your power  
 And social influence, worldly worth in short,  
 Judge what's my estimation by the fact—  
 I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,  
 Hint secrecy on one of all these words!  
 You're shrewd and know that should you publish it  
 The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,  
 “Who'd sneer—the bishop's an arch-hypocrite,  
 And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool.”  
 Whereas I should not dare for both my ears  
 • Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,  
 Before my chaplain who reflects myself—  
 My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.  
 What's your reward, self-abnegating friend?  
 Stood you confessed of those exceptional  
 And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—  
 A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,  
 A poet just about to print his ode,  
 A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,  
 An artist whose religion is his art,  
 I should have nothing to object! such men  
 Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,  
 Their druggets worth my purple, they beat me.  
 But you,—you're just as little those as I—  
 You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,  
 Write stately for Blackwood's Magazine,  
 Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul

Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll print—  
 Meantime the best you 'have to 'show being still  
 That lively lightsome article we took  
 Almost for the true Dickens,—what's the name?  
 "The Slum and Cellar—or Whitechapel life  
 Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know,  
 And pleased a month and brought you in ten pounds.  
 —Success I recognise and compliment,  
 And therefore give you, if you please, three words  
 (The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)  
 Which whether here, in Dublin, or New York,  
 Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,  
 Such terms as never you aspired to get  
 In all our own reviews and some not ours.  
 Go write your lively sketches—be the first  
 "Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"—  
 Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."  
 Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth  
 As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad  
 About me on the church-door opposite.  
 You will not wait for that experience though  
 I fancy, howsoever you decide,  
 To discontinue—not detesting, not  
 Defaming, but at least—despising me!

---

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour  
 Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*  
*Episcopus, nec non*—(the deuce knows what  
 It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)  
 With Gigadibs the literary man,  
 Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,  
 And ranged the olive stones about its edge,  
 While the great bishop rolled him out his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.  
 The other portion, as he shaped it thus  
 For argumentatory purposes,  
 He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.  
 Some arbitrary accidental thoughts  
 That crossed his mind, amusing because new,  
 He chose to represent as fixtures there,  
 Invariable convictions (such they seemed  
 Beside his interlocutor's loose cards  
 Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)  
 While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue  
 Is never bold to utter in their truth  
 Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mistake  
 To place hell at the bottom of the earth)

He ignored these,—not having in readiness  
 Their nomenclature and philosophy :  
 He said true things, but called them by wrong names.  
 “ On the whole,” he thought, “ I justify myself  
 On every point where cavillers like this  
 Oppugn my life : he tries one kind of fence—  
 I close—he’s worsted, that’s enough for him ;  
 He’s on the ground ! if the ground should break away  
 I take my stand on, there’s a firmer yet  
 Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.  
 His ground was over mine and broke the first.  
 So let him sit with me this many a year ! ”

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week  
 Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.  
 (Something had struck him in the “ Outward-bound ”  
 Another way than Blougram’s purpose was)  
 And having bought, not cabin-furniture  
 But settler’s-implements (enough for three)  
 And started for Australia—there, I hope,  
 By this time he has tested his first plough  
 And studied his last chapter of St. John.

---

## MEMORABILIA.

---

### I.

AN, did you once see Shelley plain,  
 And did he stop and speak to you ?  
 And did you speak to him again ?  
 How strange it seems, and new !

### II.

But you were living before that,  
 And you are living after,  
 And the memory I started at—  
 My starting moves your laughter



## . III.

I crossed a moor with a name of its own  
 And a use in the world no doubt,  
 Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone  
 'Mid the blank miles round about—

## IV.

For there I picked up on the heather  
 And there I put inside my breast  
 A moulted feather, an eagle-feather—  
 Well, I forget the rest.

## ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,  
 No, my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :  
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart ?  
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,  
 Treat his own subject after his own way,  
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
 And shut the money into this small hand  
 When next it takes mine. Will it ? tenderly ?  
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !  
 I often am much wearier than you think,  
 This evening more than usual, and it seems  
 As if—forgive now—should you let me sit  
 Here by the window with your hand in mine  
 And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,  
 Both of one mind, as married people use,  
 Quietly, quietly, the evening through,  
 I might get up to-morrow to my work  
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
 To-morrow how you shall be glad for this !  
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.  
 Don't count the time lost, either ; you must serve  
 For each of the five pictures we require—

It saves a model. So! keep looking so—  
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!  
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,  
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—  
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his,  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While shy looks—no one's: very dear, no less!  
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made.  
There's what we painters call our harmony!  
A common greyiness silvers everything,—  
All in a twilight, you and I alike  
—You, at the point of your first pride in me  
(That's gone you know), but I, at every point;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down  
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;  
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease  
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.  
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.  
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead!  
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are:  
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!  
This chamber for example—turn your head—  
All that's behind us! you don't understand  
Nor care to understand about my art,  
But you can hear at least when people speak;  
And that cartoon, the second from the door  
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—  
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.  
I can do with my pencil what I know,  
What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—  
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly  
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge  
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,  
And just as much they used to say in France.  
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,  
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past—  
I do what many dream of all their lives  
—Dream? strive to do, and agonies to do,  
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,

Who strive—you don't know how the others strive  
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,  
 Yet do much less, so much less, some one says,  
 (I know his name, no matter) so much less !  
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia ! I am judged.  
 There burns a truer light of God in them,  
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,  
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.  
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
 The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—  
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.  
 I, painting from myself and to myself,  
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
 His hue mistaken—what of that ? or else,  
 Rightly traced and well ordered—what of that ?  
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
 Or what's a Heaven for ? all is silver-grey  
 Placid and perfect with my art—the worse !  
 I know both what I want and what might gain—  
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
 “ Had I been two, another and myself,  
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ” No doubt.  
 Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth  
 The Urbinate who died five years ago.  
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me).  
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,  
 Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,  
 Above and through his art—for it gives way ;  
 That arm is wrongly put—and there again—  
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
 Its body, so to speak ! its soul is right,  
 He means right—that, a child may understand.  
 Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it.  
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—  
 Out of me ! out of me ! And wherefore out ?  
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,  
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.  
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—  
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.

But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,  
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—  
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !  
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
“ God and the glory ! never care for gain.  
The present by the future, what is that ?  
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—  
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three ! ”  
I might have done it for you. So it seems—  
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.  
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;  
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?  
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo ?  
In this world, who can do a thing, will not—  
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :  
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—  
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,  
That I am something underrated here,  
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,  
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
The best is when they pass and look aside ;  
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.  
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,  
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !  
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—  
One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,  
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
You painting proudly with his breath on me,  
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls  
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—  
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
This in the back-ground, waiting on my work,  
To crown the issue with a last reward !  
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?  
And had you not grown restless—but I know—  
'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct said ;  
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey—  
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt

Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.  
 How could it end in any other way ?  
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
 The triumph was to have ended there—then if  
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?  
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,  
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !  
 " Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—  
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"   
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge  
 Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows  
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
 Said one day Angelo, his very self,  
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .  
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
 " Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub  
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,  
 Who, were he set to plan and execute  
 As you are pricked on by your popes and kings,  
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours! "  
 To Rafael's !—And indeed the arm is wrong.  
 I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,  
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !  
 Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !  
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
 (What he ? why, who but Michael Angelo ?  
 Do you forget already words like those ?)  
 If really there was such a chance, so lost,  
 Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.  
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !  
 This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?  
 If you would sit thus by me every night  
 I should work better, do you comprehend ?  
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.  
 See, it is settled dusk now ; there's a star ;  
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights shew the wall,  
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.  
 Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,  
 Inside the melancholy little house  
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
 King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights  
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,  
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick  
 Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,

That gold of his I did cement them with !  
 Let us but love each other. Must you go ?  
 That Cousin here again ? he waits outside ?  
 Must see you—you, and not with me ? Those loans !  
 More gaming debts to pay ? you smiled for that ?  
 Well, let smiles buy me ! have you more to spend ?  
 While hand and eye and something of a heart  
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth ?  
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
 The grey remainder of the evening out,  
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
 How I could paint were I but back in France,  
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,  
 Not your's this time ! I want you at my side  
 To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—  
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
 Will you ? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
 I take the subjects for his corridor,  
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,  
 And throw him in another thing or two  
 If he demurs ; the whole should prove enough  
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
 What's better and what's all I care about,  
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.  
 Love, does that please you ? Ah, but what does he,  
 The Cousin ! what does he to please you more ?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
 I regret little, I would change still less.  
 Since there my past life lies, why alter it ?  
 The very wrong to Francis ! it is true  
 I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
 And built this house and sinned, and all is said.  
 My father and my mother died of want.  
 Well, had I riches of my own ? you see  
 How one gets rich ! Let each one bear his lot.  
 They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died :  
 And I have laboured somewhat in my time  
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son  
 Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try !  
 No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,  
 You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.  
 This must suffice me here. What would one have ?  
 In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—  
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem  
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
 For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me  
 To cover—the three first without a wife,

While I have mine ! So—still they overcome  
Because there's still Lúcrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's, whistle ! Go, my Love.

---

## BEFORE.

---

### I.

LET them fight it out, friend ! things have gone too far.  
God must judge the couple ! leave them as they are  
—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,  
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story.

### II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,  
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,  
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,  
Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entoilment ?

### III.

Which of them's the culprit, how must he conceive  
God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve !  
'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her.  
Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

### IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,  
Then go live his life out ! life will try his nerves,  
When the sky which noticed all, makes no disclosure,  
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

### V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,  
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes.  
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,  
With the sly mute thing beside there for a warden.

## VI.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to his side,  
A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious hide?  
When will come an end of all the mock obeisance,  
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

## VII.

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man?  
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can.  
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,  
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven.

## VIII.

All or nothing, stake it! trusts he God or no?  
Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so.  
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,  
Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-clauses.

## IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,  
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why he forgives.  
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;  
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

## X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,  
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his fall?  
No?—Let go, then—both the fighters to their places—  
While I count three, step you back as many paces.

---

 AFTER.
 

---

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first  
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man!  
Death has done all death can.  
And absorbed in the new life he leads,  
He recks not, he heeds



Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike  
 On his senses alike,  
 And are lost in the solemn and strange  
 Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase  
 His offence, my disgrace ?  
 I would we were boys as of old  
 In the field, by the fold—  
 His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn  
 Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place—  
 Cover the face.

## IN THREE DAYS.

### I.

So, I shall see her in three days  
 And just one night, but nights are short,  
 Then two long hours, and that is morn.  
 See how I come, unchanged, unworn—  
 Feel, where my life broke off from thine,  
 How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—  
 Only a touch and we combine !

### II.

Too long, this time of year, the days !  
 But nights—at least the nights are short.  
 As night shows where her one moon is,  
 A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,  
 So, life's night gives my lady birth  
 And my eyes hold her ! what is worth  
 The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

### III.

O loaded curls, release your store  
 Of warmth and scent as once before  
 The tingling hair did, lights and darks  
 Out-breaking into fairy sparks

When under curl and curl I pried  
 After the warmth and scent inside  
 Thro' lights and darks how manifold—  
 The dark inspired, the light controlled !  
 As early Art embrowned the gold.

## IV.

What great fear—should one say, “ Three days  
 That change the world, might change as well  
 Your fortune ; and if joy delays,  
 Be happy that no worse befell.”  
 What small fear—if another says,  
 “ Three days and one short night beside  
 May throw no shadow on your ways ;  
 But years must teem with change untried,  
 With chance not easily defied,  
 With an end somewhere undescried.”  
 No fear !—or if a fear be born  
 This minute, it dies out in scorn.  
 Fear ? I shall see her in three days  
 And one night, now the nights are short,  
 Then just two hours, and that is morn.

## IN A YEAR.

## I.

NEVER any more  
 While I live,  
 Need I hope to see his face  
 As before.  
 Once his love grown chill,  
 Mine may strive—  
 Bitterly we re-embrace,  
 Single still.

## II.

Was it something said,  
 Something done,  
 Vexed him ? was it touch of hand,  
 Turn of head ?

Strange ! that very way  
 Love begun.  
 I as little understand  
 Love's decay.

## III.

When I sewed or drew,  
 I recall  
 How he looked as if I sang,  
 —Sweetly too.  
 If I spoke a word,  
 First of all  
 Up his cheek the color sprang,  
 Then he heard.

## IV.

Sitting by my side,  
 At my feet,  
 So he breathed the air I breathed,  
 Satisfied !  
 I, too, at love's brim  
 Touched the sweet :  
 I would die if death bequeathed  
 Sweet to him.

## V.

“ Speak, I love thee best ! ”  
 He exclaimed.  
 “ Let thy love my own foretell,—”  
 I confessed :  
 “ Clasp my heart on thine  
 Now unblamed,  
 Since upon thy soul as well  
 Hangeth mine ! ”

## VI.

Was it wrong to own,  
 Being truth ?  
 Why should all the giving prove  
 His alone ?  
 I had wealth and ease,  
 Beauty, youth—  
 Since my lover gave me love  
 I gave these.

## VII.

That was all I meant,  
—To be just,  
And the passion I had raised  
To content.  
Since he chose to change  
Gold for dust,  
If I gave him what he praised  
Was it strange ?

## VIII.

Would he loved me yet,  
On and on,  
While I found some way undreamed  
—Paid my debt !  
Gave more life and more,  
Till, all gone,  
He should smile, “ She never seemed  
Mine before.

## IX.

“ What—she felt the while,  
Must I think ?  
Love's so different with us men,”  
He should smile.  
“ Dying for my sake—  
White and pink !  
Can't we touch these bubbles then  
But they break ? ”

## X.

Dear, the pang is brief.  
Do thy part,  
Have thy pleasure. How perplex  
Grows belief !  
Well, this cold clay clod  
Was man's heart.  
Crumble it—and what comes next ?  
Is it God ?



And mark through the winter afternoons,  
 By a gift God grants me now and then,  
 In the mild decline of those suns like moons,  
 Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go  
 For pleasure or profit, her men alive—  
 My business was hardly with them, I trow,  
 But with empty cells of the human hive ;  
 —With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,  
 The church's apsis, aisle or nave,  
 Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch—  
 Its face, set full for the sun to shave

VI.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,  
 Wherever an outline weakens and wanes  
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,  
 Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains !  
 One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,  
 Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,  
 —A lion who dies of an ass's kick,  
 The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !  
 They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,  
 The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz  
 Round the works of, you of the little wit !  
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope  
 Now that they see God face to face,  
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope ?  
 'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

VIII.

Much they reckon of your praise and you !  
 But the wronged great souls—can they be quit  
 Of a world where all their work is to do,  
 Where you style them, you of the little wit,  
 Old Master this and Early the other,  
 Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,  
 That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,  
 Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

## IX.

And here where your praise would yield returns  
 And a handsome word or two give help,  
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns  
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.  
 What, not a word for Stefano there  
 —Of brow once prominent and starry,  
 Called Nature's ape and the world's despair  
 For his peerless painting (see Vasari) ?

## X.

There he stands now. Study, my friends,  
 What a man's work comes to ! so he plans it,  
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends  
 For the toiling and moiling, and there's its transit !  
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,  
 With upturned eye while the hand is busy,  
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour !  
 'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.

## XI.

If you knew their work you would deal your dole.  
 May I take upon me to instruct you ?  
 When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,  
 Thus much had the world to boast in *fructu*—  
 The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,  
 Which the actual generations garble,  
 Was re-uttered,—and Soul (which Limbs betoken)  
 And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new in marble.

## XII.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,  
 As you might have been, as you cannot be ;  
 And bringing your own shortcomings there,  
 You grew content in your poor degree  
 With your little power, by those statues' godhead,  
 And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,  
 And your little grace, by their grace embodied,  
 And your little date, by their forms that stay.

## XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say than I am ?  
 Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.  
 You'd fain be a model ? the Son of Priam  
 Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.

You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?  
 You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!  
 You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow—  
 You die—there's the dying Alexander.

XIV.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,  
 Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,  
 Measured by Art in your breadth and length,  
 You learn—to submit is the worsted's duty.  
 —When I say “you” 'tis the common soul,  
 The collective, I mean—the race of Man  
 That receives life in parts to live in a whole,  
 And grow here according to God's own plan.

XV.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,  
 You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day  
 And cried with a start—What if we so small  
 Are greater, ay, greater the while than they!  
 Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?  
 In both, of such lower types are we  
 Precisely because of our wider nature;  
 For time, theirs—theirs, for eternity.

XVI.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,  
 It seethes with the morrow for us and more.  
 • They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:  
 We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.  
 The Artificer's hand is not arrested  
 With us—we are rough-hewn, no-wise polished:  
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested  
 With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

XVII.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—  
 The better! what's come to perfection perishes.  
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.  
 Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.  
 Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!  
 Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,  
 Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) “O!”  
 Thy great Campanile is still to finish.



## XVIII.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,  
 And what—is depending on life's one minute?  
 Hails heavenly cheef or infernal laughter  
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it?  
 And Man, this step within his endeavour,  
 His face, have no more play and action  
 Than joy which is crystallized for ever,  
 Or grief, an eternal petrifaaction!

## XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,  
 To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—  
 Replied "Become now self-acquainters,  
 And paint man, man,—whatever the issue!  
 Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,  
 New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.  
 So bring the invisible full into play,  
 Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

## XX.

Give these, I say, full honour and glory  
 For daring so much, before they well did it.  
 The first of the new, in our race's story,  
 Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.  
 The worthies began a revolution  
 Which if on the earth we intend to acknowledge  
 Honour them now—(ends my allocution)  
 Nor confer our degree when the folks leave college.

## XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—  
 That, when this life is ended, begins  
 New work for the soul in another state,  
 Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins—  
 Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,  
 Repeat in large what they practised in small,  
 Through life after life in unlimited series;  
 Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

## XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen  
 By the means of Evil that Good is best,  
 And through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene,—  
 When its faith in the same has stood the test—

Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,  
 The uses of labour are surely done.  
 There remaineth a rest for the people of God,  
 And I have had troubles enough for one.

## XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season  
 Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,  
 My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan;  
 My painter—who but Cimabue?  
 Nor ever was man of them all indeed,  
 From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,  
 Could say that he missed my critic-meed.  
 So now to my special grievance—heigh-ho!

## XXIV.

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,  
 Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,  
 Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er  
 —No getting again what the church has grasped!  
 The works on the wall must take their chance,  
 “Works never conceded to England's thick clime!”  
 (I hope they prefer their inheritance  
 Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

## XXV.

When they go at length, with such a shaking  
 Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly  
 Each master his way through the black streets taking,  
 Where many a lost work breathes though badly—  
 Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?  
 Why not reveal, while their pictures dree  
 Such doom, that a captive's to be out-ferreted?  
 Why do they never remember me?

## XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi  
 Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;  
 Nor wronged Lippino—and not a word I  
 Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.  
 But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,  
 To grant me a taste of your intonaco—  
 Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?  
 No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

## XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,  
 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,  
 Save me a sample, give me the hap  
 Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman ?  
 No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,  
 Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—  
 Could not Alesso Baldovinetti  
 Contribute so much, I ask him humbly ?

## XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,  
 With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret,  
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,  
 You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot ?)  
 No poor glimmering Crucifixion,  
 Where in the foreground kneels the donor ?  
 If such remain, as is my conviction,  
 The hoarding does you but little honour.

## XXIX.

They pass : for them the panels may thrill,  
 The tempera grow alive and tinglish—  
 Rot or are left to the mercies still  
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English !  
 Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,  
 Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno  
 At naked Art, and in ecstasies  
 Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino !

## XXX.

No matter for these ! But Giotto, you,  
 Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it  
 Never ! it shall not be counted true—  
 That a certain precious little tablet  
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—  
 Buried so long in oblivion's womb,  
 Was left for another than I to discover,—  
 Turns up at last, and to whom ?—to whom ?

## XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,  
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti ?)  
 Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary too !  
 Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti* !

My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)  
 Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye !  
 So, in anticipative gratitude,  
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy ?

XXXII.

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard  
 Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,  
 To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,  
 Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,  
 None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),  
 No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,  
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge  
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII.

We'll shoot this time better game and bag 'em hot—  
 No display at the stone of Dante,  
 But a kind of Witan-agemot  
 ("Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)  
 To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,  
 How Art may return that departed with her.  
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's !  
 And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

XXXIV.

How we shall prologuise, how we shall perorate,  
 Say fit things upon art and history—  
 • Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a zero rate,  
 Make of the want of the age no mystery !  
 Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,  
 Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks  
 Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—  
 Pure Art's birth being still the republic's !

XXXV.

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,  
 Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo*,")  
 Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,  
 Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.  
 And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia  
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,  
 Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,  
 Completing Florence, as Florence. Italy.

, XXXVI. ,

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold  
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire  
 Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled  
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire—  
 As, "God and the People" plain for its motto,  
 Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?  
 Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto  
 And Florence together, the first am I!

---

## IN A BALCONY.

## FIRST PART.

---

 CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT.

NORBERT.

Now.

CONSTANCE.

Not now.

NORBERT.

Give me them again, those hands—  
 Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!  
 Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through.  
 You cruellest, you dearest in the world,  
 Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask --  
 How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?  
 There she stays waiting for me, here stand you  
 Some time or other this was to be asked,  
 Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—  
 Let me ask now, Love!

CONSTANCE.

Do, and ruin us.

## NORBERT.

Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.  
 How I do love you! give my love ~~its~~ way!  
 A man can have but one life and one death,  
 One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—  
 Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine,  
 Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,  
 Hold you and have you, and then die away  
 If God please, with completion in my soul.

## CONSTANCE.

I am not yours then? how content this man?  
 I am not his, who change into himself,  
 Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,  
 Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair.  
 Give all that was of me away to him  
 So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,  
 Takes part with him against the woman here,  
 Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw  
 As caring that the world be cognisant  
 How he loves her and how she worships him.  
 You have this woman, not as yet that world.  
 Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me  
 By saving what I cease to care about,  
 The courtly name and pride of circumstance—  
 The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with  
 Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;  
 Just that the world may slip from under you—  
 Just that the world may cry "So much for him—  
 • The man predestined to the heap of crowns!  
 There goes his chance of winning one, at least."

## NORBERT.

The world!

## CONSTANCE.

You love it. Love me quite as well,  
 And see if I shall pray for this in vain!  
 Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

## NORBERT.

You pray for—what, in vain?

CONSTANCE.

Oh my heart's heart,  
How I do love you, Norbert!—that is right!  
But listen, or I take my hands away.  
You say, "let it be now"—you would go now  
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,  
You love me—so you do, thank God!

NORBERT.

Thank God!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,  
And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her  
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,  
Listening to me. You are the minister,  
The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.  
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work  
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)  
Made memorable by her life's success,  
That junction of two crowns on her sole head  
Her house had only dreamed of anciently.  
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth  
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?  
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved  
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?  
You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven.  
Next comes the Queen's turn. Name your own reward!  
With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come.  
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun  
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,  
Possess yourself supremely of her life,  
You choose the single thing she will not grant—  
The very declaration of which choice  
Will turn the scale and neutralise your work.  
At best she will forgive you, if she can.  
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

NORBERT.

Wait. First, do you retain your old belief  
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

CONSTANCE.

There, there!

So men make women love them, while they know  
 No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,  
 You that are just and generous beside,  
 Make it your own case. For example now,  
 I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—  
 Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—  
 The kiss, because you have a name at court,  
 This hand and this, that you may shut in each  
 A jewel, if you please to pick up such.  
 That's horrible! Apply it to the Queen—  
 Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak.  
 "I was a nameless man: you needed me:  
 Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood  
 A certain pretty Cousin at your side.  
 Why did I make such common cause with you?  
 Access to her had not been easy else.  
 You give my labours here abundant praise:  
 'Faith, labour, while she overlooked, grew play.  
 How shall your gratitude discharge itself?  
 Give me her hand!"

NORBERT.

And still I urge the same.  
 Is the Queen just? just generous or no!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, just. You love a rose—no harm in that—  
 But was it for the rose's sake or mine  
 You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—  
 Then mine you still must say or else be false.  
 You told the Queen you served her for herself:  
 If so, to serve her was to serve yourself!  
 She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!  
 I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,  
 One sees the twenty pictures—there's a life  
 Better than life—and yet no life at all;  
 Conceive her born in such a magic dome,  
 Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,  
 Can recognise its given things and facts,  
 The fight of giants or the feast of gods,  
 Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,  
 Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,  
 Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—  
 And who shall question that she knows them all  
 In better semblance than the things outside?  
 Yet bring into the silent gallery



Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,  
 Some lion, with the painted lion there—  
 You think she'll understand composedly ?  
 —Say, " that's his fellow in the hunting-piece  
 Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times ? "  
 Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,  
 Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,  
 Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.  
 The real exists for us outside, not her—  
 How should it, with that life in these four walls,  
 That father and that mother, first to last  
 No father and no mother—friends, a heap,  
 Lovers, no lack-- a husband in due time,  
 And everyone of them alike a lie !  
 Things painted by a Rubens out of nought  
 Into what kindness, friendship, love should be ;  
 All better, all more grandiose than life,  
 Only no life ; mere cloth and surface-paint  
 You feel while you admire. How should she feel ?  
 And now that she has stood thus fifty years  
 The sole spectator in that gallery,  
 You think to bring this warm real struggling love  
 In to her of a sudden, and suppose  
 She'll keep her state untroubled ? Here's the truth—  
 She'll apprehend its value at a glance,  
 Prefer it to the pictured loyalty !  
 You only have to say " so men are made,  
 For this they act, the thing has many names  
 But this the right one—and now, Queen, be just ! "  
 And life slips back—you lose her at the word—  
 You do not even for amends gain me.  
 He will not understand ! oh, Norbert, Norbert,  
 Do you not understand ?

NORBERT.

The Queen's the Queen,  
 I am myself—no picture, but alive  
 In every nerve and every muscle, here  
 At the palace-window or in the people's street,  
 As she in the gallery where the pictures glow.  
 The good of life is precious to us both.  
 She cannot love—what do I want with rule ?  
 When first I saw your face a year ago  
 I knew my life's good—my soul heard one voice  
 " The woman yonder, there's no use of life  
 But just to obtain her ! heap earth's woes in one  
 And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys

And spurn them, as they help or help not here;  
 Only, obtain her!"—How was it to be?  
 I found she was the cousin of the Queen;  
 I must then serve the Queen to get to her—  
 No other way. Suppose there had been one,  
 And I by saying prayers to some white star  
 With promise of my body and my soul  
 Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?  
 Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,  
 And did what other servants failed to do.  
 Neither she sought nor I declared my end.  
 Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,  
 And let me name you as that recompense.  
 She dreamed that such a thing could never be?  
 Let her wake now. She thinks there was some cause—  
 The love of power, of fame, pure loyalty?  
 —Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives  
 Chasing such shades. Then I've a fancy too.  
 I worked because I want you with my soul—  
 I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now.

CONSTANCE.

Had I not loved you from the very first,  
 Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus  
 So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,  
 You might be thus impatient. What's conceived  
 Of us without here, by the folks within?  
 Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—  
 Where am I now?—intent on festal robes—  
 We two, embracing under death's spread hand!  
 • What was this thought for, what this scruple of yours  
 Which broke the council up, to bring about  
 One minute's meeting in the corridor?  
 And then the sudden sleights, long secresies,  
 The plots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,  
 Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,  
 "Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"  
 A year of this compression's ecstasy  
 All goes for nothing? you would give this up  
 For the old way, the open way, the world's,  
 His way who beats, and his who sells his wife?  
 What tempts you? their notorious happiness,  
 That you're ashamed of ours? The best you'll get  
 Will be, the Queen grants all that you require,  
 Concedes the cousin, and gets rid of you  
 And her at once, and gives us ample leave  
 To live as our five hundred happy friends.

The world will show us with officious hand  
 Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,  
 When we so oft have stolen across her traps !  
 Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's foot,  
 And make it duty to be bold and swift,  
 When long ago 'twas nature. Have it so !  
 He never hawked by rights till flung from fist ?  
 Oh, the man's thought !—no woman's such a fool.

NORBERT.

Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more  
 One made to love you, let the world take note.  
 Have I done worthy work ? be love's the praise,  
 Though hampered by restrictions, barred against  
 By set forms, blinded by forced seceresies.  
 Set free my love, and see what love will do  
 Shown in my life—what work will spring from that !  
 The world is used to have its business done  
 On other grounds, find great effects produced  
 For power's sake, fame's sake, motives you have named.  
 So good. But let my low ground shame their high.  
 Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true !  
 And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest !  
 I choose to have you stamped all over me,  
 Your name upon my forehead and my breast,  
 You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,  
 That men may see, all over, you in me—  
 That pale loves may die out of their pretence  
 In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off—  
 Permit this, Constance ! Love has been so long  
 Subdued in me, eating me through and through,  
 That now it's all of me and must have way.  
 Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,  
 Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,  
 That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,  
 Trembling at last to its assured result—  
 Then think of this revulsion. I resume  
 Life, after death, (it is no less than life  
 After such long unlovely labouring days)  
 And liberate to beauty life's great need  
 Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,  
 Suppress itself erewhile. This eve's the time—  
 This eve intense with yon first trembling star  
 We seem to pant and reach ; scarce aught between  
 The earth that rises and the heaven that bends—  
 All nature self-abandoned—every tree  
 Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts .

And fixed so, every flower and every weed,  
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat :  
 All under God, each measured by itself !  
 These statues round us, each abrupt, distinct,  
 The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,  
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,  
 The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose,  
 And God's approval on his universe !  
 Let us do so—aspire to live as these  
 In harmony with truth, ourselves being true.  
 Take the first way, and let the second come.  
 My first is to possess myself of you ;  
 The music sets the march-step—forward then !  
 And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,  
 The world to witness, wonder and applaud.  
 Our flower of life breaks open. No delay !

CONSTANCE.

And so shall we be ruined, both of us.  
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone—  
 You do not know her, were not born to it,  
 To feel what she can see or cannot see.  
 Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,  
 Generous as you are. For, in that thin frame  
 Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,  
 There lived a lavish soul until it starved  
 Debarred all healthy food. Look to the soul—  
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin  
 (The true man's way) on justice and your rights.  
 Exactions and acquittance of the past.  
 Begin so—see what justice she will deal !  
 We women hate a debt as men a gift.  
 Suppose her some poor keeper of a school  
 Whose business is to sit thro' summer-months  
 And dole out children's leave to go and play,  
 Herself superior to such lightness—she  
 In the arm-chair's state and pedagogic pomp,  
 To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside—  
 We wonder such an one looks black on us ?  
 I do not bid you wake her tenderness,  
 —That were vain truly—none is left to wake—  
 But, let her think her justice is engaged  
 To take the shape of tenderness, and mark  
 If she'll not coldly do its warmest deed !  
 Does she love me, I ask you ? not a whit.  
 Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged  
 To help a kinswoman, she took me up—

Did more on that bare ground than other loves  
 Would do on greater argument. For me,  
 I have no equivalent of that cold kind  
 To pay her with ; my love alone to give  
 If I give anything. I give her love.  
 I feel I ought to help her, and I will.  
 So for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice  
 That women hate a debt as men a gift.  
 If I were you, I could obtain this grace—  
 Would lay the whole I did to love's account,  
 Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—  
 Declare that my success was recompense ;  
 It would be so, in fact : what were it else ?  
 And then, once loosed her generosity  
 As you will mark it—then,—were I but you  
 To turn it, let it seem to move itself,  
 And make it give the thing I really take,  
 Accepting so, in the poor cousin's hand,  
 All value as the next thing to the queen—  
 Since none loves her directly, none dares that !  
 A shadow of a thing, a name's mere echo  
 Suffices those who miss the name and thing ;  
 You pick up just a ribbon she has worn  
 To keep in proof how near her breath you came.  
 Say I'm so near I seem a piece of her—  
 Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)  
 And find the same gift yielded with a grace,  
 Which if you make the least show to extort  
 —You'll see ! and when you have ruined both of us,  
 Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude !

NORBERT.

Then, if I turn it that way, you consent ?  
 'Tis not my way ; I have more hope in truth,  
 Still if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,  
 Is scarcely false, I'll so express the sense.  
 Will you remain here ?

CONSTANCE.

O best heart of mine,  
 How I have loved you ! then, you take my way ?  
 Are mine as you have been her minister,  
 Work out my thought, give it effect for me,  
 Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve ?  
 I owe that withered woman everything.—  
 Life, fortune, you, remember ! Take my part—

Help me to pay her! \*Stand upon your rights?  
 You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?  
 Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.

NORBERT.

Remain here. How you know me!

CONSTANCE.

Ah, but still---

[*He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music  
 from within.*]

## SECOND PART.

*Enter the QUEEN.*

QUEEN.

Constance!—She is here as he said. Speak! quick!  
 Is it so? is it true—or false? One word!

CONSTANCE.

True.

QUEEN.

Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

CONSTANCE.

Madam!

QUEEN.

I love you, Constance, from my soul.  
 Now say once more, with any words you will,  
 'Tis true—all true—as true as that I speak.

CONSTANCE.

Why should you doubt it ?

QUEEN.

Ah, why doubt ? why doubt  
 Dear, make me see it. Do you see it so ?  
 None see themselves—another sees them best.  
 You say “why doubt it ?”—you see him and me.  
 It is because the Mother has such grace  
 That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—  
 Whate’er we yearn for would be granted us ;  
 Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair.  
 Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,  
 And so accepting life, abjure ourselves !  
 Constance, I had abjured the hope of love  
 And of being loved, as truly as you pain  
 The hope of seeing Egypt from that turf.

CONSTANCE.

Heaven !

QUEEN.

But it was so, Constance, it was so.  
 Men say—or do men say it ? fancies say—  
 “ Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.  
 Too late—no love for you, too late for love—  
 Leave love to girls. Be queen—let Constance love ! ”  
 One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,  
 Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.  
 “ Oh, love, true, never think of love again !  
 I am a queen—I rule, not love, indeed.”  
 So it goes on ; so a face grows like this,  
 Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,  
 Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God !

CONSTANCE.

I cannot understand——

QUEEN.

The happier you !  
 Constance, I know not how it is with men.  
 For women, (I am a woman now like you)

There is no good of life but love—but love !  
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love—  
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,  
Never you cheat yourself one instant. Love,  
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest !  
O Constance, how I love you !

CONSTANCE.

I love you.

QUEEN.

I do believe that all is come through you.  
I took you to my heart to keep it warm  
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me ;  
I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.  
Oh, I am very old now, am I not ?  
Not so ! it is true, and it shall be true !

CONSTANCE.

Tell it me ! let me judge if true or false.

QUEEN.

Ah, but I fear you—you will look at me  
And say “she’s old, she’s grown unlovely quite  
Who ne’er was beauteous ! men want beauty still.”  
Well, so I feared—the curse ! so I felt sure.

CONSTANCE.

Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say ?

QUEEN.

Constance, he came, the coming was not strange—  
Do not I stand and see men come and go ?  
I turned a half-look from my pedestal  
Where I grow marble—“one young man the more !  
He will love some one,—that is nought to me—  
What would he with my marble stateliness ? ”  
Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore ;  
The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,  
And I still older, with less flesh to change—  
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.



It seemed still harder when he first began  
 Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs  
 The old way for the old end, interest.  
 Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts  
 Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,  
 Professing they've no care but for your cause,  
 Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,  
 And you the marble statue all the time  
 They praise and point at as preferred to life,  
 Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,  
 First dancer's, gypsy's, or street baladine's!  
 Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech  
 Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,  
 Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,  
 Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,  
 Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,  
 While not a man of these broke rank and spoke,  
 Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,  
 Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.  
 There have been moments, if the sentinel  
 Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,  
 Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,  
 I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

CONSTANCE.

Who could have comprehended !

QUEEN.

Ay, who—who ?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.  
 Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps  
 It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

CONSTANCE.

I wait to tell it.

QUEEN.

Well, you see, he came,  
 Outfaced the others, did a work this year  
 Exceeds in value all was ever done  
 You know—it is not I who say it—all  
 Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)  
 I grew aware not only of what he did,  
 But why so wondrously. Oh, never work  
 Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—

It must have finer aims to spur it on !  
 I felt, I saw he loved—loved somebody.  
 And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,  
 I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

CONSTANCE.

Me, madam ?

QUEEN.

It did seem to me your face  
 Met him where'er he looked : and whom but you  
 Was such a man to love ? it seemed to me  
 You saw he loved you, and approved the love,  
 And that you both were in intelligence.  
 You could not loiter in the garden, step  
 Into this balcony, but I straight was stung  
 And forced to understand. It seemed so true,  
 So right, so beautiful, so like you both  
 That all this work should have been done by him  
 Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,  
 But that at last—suppose some night like this—  
 Borne on to claim his due reward of me  
 He might say, " Give her hand and pay me so."  
 And I ( O Constance, you shall love me now )  
 I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,  
 — " And he shall have it. I will make her blest,  
 My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,  
 My happiest woman's self that might have been !  
 These two shall have their joy and leave me here.'  
 Yes—yes——

CONSTANCE.

Thanks !

QUEEN.

And the word was on my lip.  
 When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear  
 A mere calm statement of his just desire  
 In payment of his labour. When, O Heaven,  
 How can I tell you ? cloud was on my eyes  
 And thunder in my ears at that first word  
 Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—  
 He loved me—from the first step to the last,  
 Loved me !

CONSTANCE.

You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke  
Of love? what if you should mistake?

QUEEN

No, no—  
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!  
He had not dared to hint the love he felt—  
You were my reflex—how I understood!  
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,  
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,  
And love, love was the end of every phrase.  
Love is begun—this much is come to pass,  
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours—  
I will learn, I will place my life on you,  
But teach me how to keep what I have won.  
Am I so old? this hair was early grey;  
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,  
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.  
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.  
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,  
Beautiful—for the last French painter did!  
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—  
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!  
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out  
And set her by their side to take the eye:  
I must have felt that good would come from you.  
I am not generous—like him—like you!  
But he is not your lover after all—  
It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?  
You have not been mistaking words or looks?  
He said you were the reflex of myself—  
And yet he is not such a paragon  
To you, to younger women who may choose  
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!  
You know you never named his name to me—  
You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,  
Not up now, even to you!

CONSTANCE.

Then calm yourself.

QUEEN.

See, I am old—look here, you happy girl,  
I will not play the fool, deceive myself;

'Tis all gone—put your cheek beside my cheek—  
 Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold !  
 But then I set my life upon one chance,  
 The last chance and the best—am *I* not left,  
 My soul, myself ? All women love great men  
 If young or old—it is in all the tales—  
 Young beauties love old poets who can love—  
 Why should not he the poems in my soul,  
 The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,  
 The constancy ? I throw them at his feet.  
 Who cares to see the fountain's very shape  
 And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's  
 That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around ?  
 You could not praise indeed the empty conch ;  
 But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.  
 How I will love him ! cannot men love love ?  
 Who was a queen and loved a poet once  
 Humpbacked, a dwarf ? ah, women can do that !  
 Well, but men too ! at least, they tell you so.  
 They love so many women in their youth,  
 And even in age they all love whom they please ;  
 And yet the best of them confide to friends  
 That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—  
 They spend a day with such and tire the next ;  
 They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,  
 Novelty even. Let us confess the truth  
 Horrible though it be—that prejudice,  
 Prescription . . . Curses ! they will love a queen.  
 They will—they do. And will not, does not—he ?

CONSTANCE.

How can he ? You are wedded—'tis a name  
 We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,  
 His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled  
 As you believe and I incline to think,  
 Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all ?

QUEEN.

Hear her ! there, there now—could she love like me ?  
 What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace ?  
 See all it does or could do ! so, youth loves !  
 Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do  
 What I will—you, it was not born in ! I  
 Will drive these difficulties far and fast  
 As yonder mists curdling before the moon.  
 I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve

My youth from its enforced calamity,  
Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,  
His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

CONSTANCE.

You will do—dare do—Pause on what you say !

QUEEN.

Hear her ! I thank you, Sweet, for that surprise.  
You have the fair face : for the soul, see mine !  
I have the strong soul : let me teach you, here.  
I think I have borne enough and long enough,  
And patiently enough, the world's remarks,  
To have my own way now, unblamed by all.  
It does so happen, I rejoice for it,  
This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.  
There's not a better way of settling claims  
Than this ; God sends the accident express ;  
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,  
'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,  
Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,  
And bless God simply, or should almost fear  
To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.  
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate !  
How strong I am ! could Norbert see me now !

CONSTANCE.

Let me consider. It is all too strange.

QUEEN.

You, Constance, learn of me ; do you, like me.  
You are young, beautiful : my own, best girl,  
You will have many lovers, and love one -  
Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,  
And taller than he is, for you are tall.  
Love him like me ! give all away to him ;  
Think never of yourself ; throw by your pride,  
Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once  
And love him simply for his very self.  
Remember, I (and what am I to you ?)  
Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,  
Do all but just unlove him ! he loves me.

CONSTANCE.

He shall.

QUEEN.

You, step inside my inmost heart.  
 Give me your own heart—let us have one heart—  
 I'll come to you for counsel ; " This he says,  
 This he does, what should this amount to, pray ?  
 Beseech you, change it into current coin.  
 Is that worth kisses ? shall I please him there ? "  
 And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else ?  
 Your love (according to your beauty's worth)  
 For you shall have some noble love, all gold—  
 Whom choose you ? we will get him at your choice.  
 —Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since  
 I felt as I must die or be alone  
 Breathing my soul into an ear like yours.  
 Now, I would face the world with my new life,  
 With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,  
 And then come back and tell you how it feels.  
 How soon a smile of God can change the world !  
 How we are all made for happiness—how work  
 Grows play, adversity a winning fight !  
 True, I have lost so many years. What then ?  
 Many remain—God has been very good.  
 You, stay here. 'Tis as different from dreams,—  
 From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,  
 As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.  
 The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon !

[*She goes out. Dance-music from within.*

---

### PART THIRD.

---

NORBERT *enters*.

NORBERT.

Well ! we have but one minute and one word—

CONSTANCE.

I am yours, Norbert !

NORBERT.

Yes, mine.

CONSTANCE.

Not till now !  
You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

NORBERT.

Constance !

CONSTANCE.

Your own ! I know the thriftier way  
Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.  
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole  
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,  
With a new largess still at each despair)  
And force you keep in sight the deed, reserve  
Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,  
My giving and your taking, both our joys  
Dying together. Is it the wiser way ?  
I choose the simpler ; I give all at once.  
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon.  
Use it, abuse it,—anything but say  
Hereafter, “ Had I known she loved me so,  
And what my means, I might have thriven with it.”  
This is your means. I give you all myself.

NORBERT.

I take you and thank God.

CONSTANCE.

Look on through years !  
We cannot kiss a second day like this,  
Else were this earth, no earth.

NORBERT.

With this day's heat  
We shall go on through years of cold.

CONSTANCE.

So best.  
I try to see those years—I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth comes ; you look back  
And lay all to the first glow—not sit down  
For ever brooding on a day like this  
While seeing the embers whiten and love die.  
Yes, love lives best in its effect ; and mine,  
Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

NORBERT.

Just so. I take and know you all at once.  
Your soul is disengaged so easily,  
Your face is there, I know you ; give me time,  
Let me be proud and think you shall know me.  
My soul is slower : in a life I roll  
The minute out in which you condense yours—  
The whole slow circle round you I must move.  
To be just you. I look to a long life  
To decompose this minute, prove its worth.  
'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one  
Shall show you in the end what fire was crammed  
In that mere stone you struck : you could not know,  
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,  
As now my heart lies ? your own warmth would hide  
Its coldness, were it cold.

CONSTANCE.

But how prove, how ?

NORBERT.

Prove in my life, you ask ?

CONSTANCE.

Quick, Norbert—how ?

NORBERT.

That's easy told. I count life just a stuff  
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.  
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.  
As with the body—he who hurls a lance  
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,  
So I will seize and use all means to prove  
And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,  
And justify us both.



CONSTANCE.

Could you write books,  
Paint pictures! one sits down in poverty  
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

NORBERT.

And loves one's painting and one's writing too,  
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,  
And we best as no other than we are.  
We live, and they experiment on life  
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof  
To overlook the farther. Let us be  
The thing they look at! I might take that face  
And write of it and paint it—to what end?  
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air  
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form  
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life  
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,  
Made for me, not for others in the world,  
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,  
That cold calm power to see how fair you look.  
I come to you—I leave you not, to write  
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there  
Paint us.

CONSTANCE.

So best!

NORBERT.

I understand your soul.  
You live, and rightly sympathise with life,  
With action, power, success: this way is straight.  
And days were short beside, to let me change  
The craft my childhood learnt; my craft shall serve.  
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,  
Manure their barren lives and force the fruit  
First for themselves, and afterward for me  
In the due tithe; the task of some one man,  
By ways of work appointed by themselves.  
I am not bid create, they see no star  
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—  
But bind in one and carry out their wills.  
So I began: to-night sees how I end.  
What if it see, too, my first outbreak here

Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,  
 The instincts of the heart that teach the head?  
 What if the people have discerned in me  
 The dawn of the next nature, the new man  
 Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,  
 And whom they trust to find them out new ways  
 To the new heights which yet he only sees?  
 I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,  
 This people—in our phrase, this mass of men—  
 See how the mass lies passive to my hand  
 And how my hand is plastic, and you by  
 To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end  
 Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first.  
 My will be on this people! then, the strain,  
 The grappling of the potter with his clay,  
 The long uncertain struggle,—the success  
 In that uprising of the spirit-work.  
 The vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,  
 While rounded fair for lower men to see  
 The Graces in a dance they recognise  
 With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!  
 So triumph ever shall renew itself;  
 Ever to end in efforts higher yet,  
 Ever begun——

CONSTANCE.

I ever helping?

NORBERT.

Thus!

*[As he embraces her, enter the QUEEN.]*

CONSTANCE.

Hist, madam—so I have performed my part.  
 You see your gratitude's true decency,  
 Norbert? a little slow in seeing it!  
 Begun to end the sooner. What's a kiss?

NORBERT.

Constance!

CONSTANCE.

Why, must I teach it you again?  
 You want a witness to your dullness, sir?

What was I saying this ten minutes long ?  
 Then I repeat—when some young handsome man  
 Like you has acted out a part like yours,  
 Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,  
 So very far beyond him, as he says—  
 So hopelessly in love, that but to speak  
 Would prove him mad, he thinks judiciously,  
 And makes some insignificant good soul  
 Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant  
 And very stalking-horse to cover him  
 In following after what he dares not face—  
 When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand ?)  
 When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,  
 — May I not say so, madam ?—tops his hope,  
 And overpasses so his wildest dream,  
 With glad consent of all, and most of her  
 The confidant who brought the same about—  
 Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,  
 I do say that the merest gentleman  
 Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,  
 Dismiss it with a "There, enough of you !"  
 Forget it, show his back unmannerly ;  
 But like a liberal heart will rather turn  
 And say, "A tingling time of hope was ours—  
 Betwixt the fears and falterings—we two lived  
 A chanceful time in waiting for the prize.  
 The confidant, the Constance, served not ill ;  
 And though I shall forget her in due time,  
 Her use being answered now, as reason bids,  
 Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,  
 Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,  
 The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,  
 And the first—which is the last—thankful kiss."

NORBERT.

—Constance ? it is a dream—ah see you smile !

CONSTANCE.

So, now his part being properly performed,  
 Madam, I turn to you and finish mine  
 As duly—I do justice in my turn.  
 Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well—  
 He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I  
 Who served to prove your soul accessible.  
 I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place,  
 When oft they had wandered out into despair,

And kept love constant toward its natural aim.  
 Enough—my part is played; you stoop half-way  
 And meet us royally and spare our fears—  
 'Tis like yourself—he thanks you, so do I.  
 Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised  
 By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!  
 Yourself—the only one on earth who can—  
 Do all for him, much more than a mere heart  
 Which though warm is not useful in its warmth  
 As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that  
 Around him gently, tenderly. For him—  
 For him,—he knows his own part.

NORBERT.

Have you done?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?  
 Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,  
 Or did you but accept it? Well—at least,  
 You lose by it.

CONSTANCE.

Now, madam, 'tis your turn.  
 Restrain him still from speech a little more  
 And make him happier and more confident!  
 Pity him, madam, he is timid yet.  
 Mark. Norbert! do not shrink now! Here I yield  
 My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!  
 With her go put in practice the great schemes  
 You team with, follow the career else closed—  
 Be all you cannot be except by her!  
 Behold her.—Madam, say for pity's sake  
 Anything—frankly say you love him. Else  
 He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in  
 His fear than you conceive—I know the man.

NORBERT.

I know the woman somewhat, and confess  
 I thought she had jested better—she begins  
 To overcharge her part. I gravely wait  
 Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

QUEEN.

Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognise  
 Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,  
 Eccentric speech and variable mirth,

Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold  
 Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)  
 —May still be right : I may do well to speak  
 And make authentic what appears a dream  
 To even myself. For, what she says, is true—  
 Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now of love,  
 Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,  
 But justified a warmth felt long before.  
 Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say,—  
 Strange ! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said,  
 Your courage helps mine : you did well to speak  
 To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' toil—  
 But still I had not waited to discern  
 Your heart so long, believe me ! From the first  
 The source of so much zeal was almost plain,  
 In absence even of your own words just now  
 Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very strange,  
 But takes a happy ending—in your love  
 Which mine meets : be it so—as you choose me.  
 So I choose you.

NORBERT.

And worthily you choose !  
 I will not be unworthy your esteem,  
 No, madam. I do love you ; I will meet  
 Your nature, now I know it ; this was well,  
 I see,—you dare and you are justified :  
 But none had ventured such experiment,  
 Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,  
 Less confident of finding it in me.  
 I like that thus you test me ere you grant  
 The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best  
 Of women to my arms ! 'tis like yourself !  
 So—back again into my part's set words —  
 Devotion to the uttermost is yours,  
 But no, you cannot, madam, even you,  
 Create in me the love our Constance does.  
 Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—  
 Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent  
 Invites a certain insect—that's myself—  
 But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground :  
 I take this lady !

CONSTANCE.

Stay—not her's, the trap—  
 Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all.  
 (He is too cunning, madam !) it was I,  
 I, Norbert, who . . .

NORBERT.

You, was it, Constance? Then,  
 But for the grace of this divinest hour  
 Which gives me you, I should not pardon here.  
 I am the Queen's: she only knows my brain—  
 She may experiment therefore on my heart  
 And I instruct her too by the result;  
 But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long  
 Have told my heart-beats over, held my life  
 In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

CONSTANCE.

Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?  
 The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

NORBERT.

Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test!  
 There's not the meanest woman in the world,  
 Not she I least could love in all the world,  
 Whom, did she love me, did love prove itself,  
 I dared insult as you insult me now.  
 Constance, I could say, if it must be said,  
 "Take back the soul you offer—I keep mine"  
 But—"Take the soul still quivering on your hand,  
 The soul so offered, which I cannot use,  
 And, please you, give it to some friend of mine,  
 For—what's the trifle he requites me with?"  
 I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,  
 That two may mock her heart if it succumb?  
 No! fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,  
 I would not dare insult a woman so,  
 Were she the meanest woman in the world,  
 And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

CONSTANCE.

Norbert!

NORBERT.

I love once as I live but once.  
 What case is this to think or talk about?  
 I love you. Would it mend the case at all  
 Should such a step as this kill love in me?  
 Your part were done: account to God for it.

But mine—could murdered love get up again,  
 And kneel to whom you pleased to designate  
 And make you mirth? It is too horrible.  
 You did not know this, Constance? now you know  
 That body and soul have each one life, but one:  
 And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

CONSTANCE.

See the Queen! Norbert—this one more last word—  
 If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus  
 Loved me in earnest . . .

NORBERT.

Ah, no jest holds here!  
 Where is the laughter in which jests break up?  
 And what this horror that grows palpable?  
 Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?  
 Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the truth?  
 How could I other? Was it not your test,  
 To try me, and what my love for Constance meant?  
 Madam, your royal soul itself approves,  
 The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes  
 A beggar—asks him what would buy his child,  
 And then approves the expected laugh of scorn  
 Returned as something noble from the rags.  
 Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?  
 You two glare each at each like panthers now.  
 Constance—the world fades; only you stand there!  
 You did not in to-night's wild whirl of things  
 Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price?  
 No—no—'tis easy to believe in you.  
 Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop  
 Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still—  
 Though I should curse, I love you. I am love  
 And cannot change! love's self is at your feet.

[QUEEN goes out.]

CONSTANCE.

Feel my heart; let it die against your own.

NORBERT.

Against my own! explain not; let this be.  
 This is life's height.

CONSTANCE.

Yours! Yours! Yours!

NORBERT.

You and I—

Why care by what meanders we are here  
In the centre of the labyrinth? men have died  
Trying to find this place out, which we have found.

CONSTANCE.

Found, found!

NORBERT.

Sweet, never fear what she can do—  
We are past harm now.

CONSTANCE.

On the breast of God.  
I thought of men—as if you were a man.  
Tempting him with a crown!

NORBERT.

This must end here—

It is too perfect!

CONSTANCE.

There's the music stopped.  
What measured heavy tread? it is one blaze  
About me and within me.

NORBERT.

Oh, some death  
Will run its sudden finger round this spark,  
And sever us from the rest—

CONSTANCE.

And so do well.

Now the doors open—

NORBERT.

'Tis the guard comes.

CONSTANCE.

Kiss!



## SAUL.

## I.

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou  
speak,  
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss  
his cheek.  
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance  
sent,  
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent  
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,  
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.  
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,  
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer or of  
praise,  
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,  
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon  
life.

## II.

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child, with his dew  
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue  
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat  
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

## III.

Then I, as was meet,  
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,  
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was  
unloosed;  
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;  
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and  
gone,  
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on  
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I  
prayed,  
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid,  
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice  
replied.  
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried

A something more black than the blackness—the vast the  
 upright  
 Main prop which sustains the pavilion : and slow into sight  
 Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all ;—  
 Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,—showed Saul.

## IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop ; both arms stretched out  
 wide  
 On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side :  
 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,—as, caught in his  
 pangs  
 And waiting his change the king-serpent all heavily hangs,  
 Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come  
 With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind  
 and dumb

## V.

Then I turned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its  
 chords  
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the monotony—those sun-  
 beams like swords !  
 And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after  
 one,  
 So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be done.  
 They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed  
 Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's  
 bed ;  
 And now one after one seeks its lodgings, as star follows star  
 Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far !

## VI.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each  
 leave his mate  
 To fly after the player ; then, what makes the crickets elate,  
 Till for boldness they fight one another : and then, what has  
 weight  
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house—  
 There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half  
 mouse !—  
 God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our  
 fear,  
 To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

## VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song,  
 when hand  
 Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great  
 hearts expand  
 And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the  
 last song  
 When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear  
 him along  
 With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets ! are balm-seeds  
 not here  
 To console us? The land has none left, such as he on the bier.  
 Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother !"—And then, the  
 glad chaunt  
 Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom  
 we vaunt  
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great  
 march  
 Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch  
 Nought can break ; who shall harm them, our friends ?—Then,  
 the chorus intoned  
 As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned . . .  
 But I stopped here—for here in the darkness, Saul groaned.

## VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened  
 apart ;  
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—and sparkles  
 'gan dart  
 From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start—  
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.  
 So the head—but the body still moved not, still hung there  
 erect.  
 And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,  
 As I sang,—

## IX.

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour ! no spirit feels waste,  
 Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.  
 Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up to rock—  
 The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the ool silver  
 shock  
 Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear,  
 And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over with gold dust  
 divine,  
 And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full draught  
 of wine,  
 And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bullrushes tell  
 That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.  
 How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ  
 All the heart and the soul and the senses, for ever in joy!  
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword  
 thou didst guard  
 When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious  
 reward?  
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men  
 sung  
 The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her faint  
 tongue  
 Joining in while it could to the witness. 'Let one more attest,  
 I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for  
 best . . .'  
 Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much,  
 —but the rest.  
 And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence  
 grew  
 Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained  
 true!  
 And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and  
 hope,  
 Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the eye's  
 scope—  
 Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;  
 And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one head  
 combine!  
 On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage, like  
 the throe  
 That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the gold go:  
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning it,  
 —all  
 Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

## X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp and  
 voice,  
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice  
 Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,  
 The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through its  
 array,

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and  
stopped,  
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung  
propt  
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his  
name.  
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the  
aim,  
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held, (he  
alone,  
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust  
of stone  
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of  
the sheet?  
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his  
feet,  
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive yet, your mountain  
of old,  
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—  
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and  
scar  
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there  
they are!  
Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest  
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on its  
crest  
For their food in the ardours of summer! One long shudder  
thrilled  
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was  
stilled,  
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.  
What was gone, what remained? all to traverse 'twixt hope  
and despair—  
Death was past, life not come—so he waited. Awhile his right  
hand  
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to  
remand  
To their place what new objects should enter: 'twas Saul as  
before.  
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any  
more  
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the  
shore  
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline  
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine  
Base with base to knit strength more intense: so, arm folded  
in arm  
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

## XI.

What spell or what charm,  
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next should I  
 urge  
 To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled to  
 the verge  
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields  
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty! Beyond, on  
 what fields,  
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye  
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put  
 by?  
 He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not—he lets me praise  
 life,  
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

## XII.

Then fancies grew rife  
 Which had come long ago on the pastures, when round me  
 the sheep  
 Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep,  
 And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that might lie  
 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and  
 the sky:  
 And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with  
 my flocks,  
 Let me people at least with my fancies, the plains and the  
 rocks,  
 Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show  
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!  
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that  
 gains,  
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now  
 these old trains  
 Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so once more the  
 string  
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

## XIII.

"Yea, my king,"  
 I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that  
 spring  
 From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by  
 brute:  
 In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears  
 fruit.

Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem  
 trembled first  
 Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst  
 The fan-branches all round; and thou mindedst when these  
 too, in turn  
 Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was  
 to learn,  
 Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates  
 shall we slight,  
 When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the  
 plight  
 Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not  
 so! stem and branch  
 Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine  
 shall staunch  
 Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such  
 wine.  
 Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!  
 By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt  
 enjoy  
 More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a boy.  
 Crush that life, and behold its wine running! each deed thou  
 hast done  
 Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun  
 Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though  
 tempests efface,  
 Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must every where  
 trace  
 The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy  
 will,  
 Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill  
 Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they too give  
 forth  
 A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill the south and the  
 north  
 With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the  
 past.  
 But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.  
 As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at her height,  
 So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.  
 No! again a long draught of my soul-wine! look forth o'er the  
 years—  
 Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the  
 seer's!  
 Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid  
 arise  
 A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till built to the  
 skies.

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers—whose fame  
would ye know?

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go  
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he  
did;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—  
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to  
amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall  
spend

(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record  
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great  
word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave  
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet  
winds rave:

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part  
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou  
art."

## XIV.

And behold while I sang . . But O Thou who didst grant me  
that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted, thy help to essay  
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my Shield and my  
Sword

In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my  
word,—

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour  
And sealing the highest man's thought could, gazed hopeless as  
ever

On the new stretch of Heaven above me—till, Mighty to save,  
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne  
from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart,  
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that night I  
took part,

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,  
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!

For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves  
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron  
retrieves

Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

## XV.

While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong  
I say then,—my song



Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed  
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed  
 His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes  
 Of his turban, and see—"the huge sweat that his countenance  
 bathes,

He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of  
 yore,

And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.

He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent

The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though  
 much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did  
 choose,

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.

So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile

Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there  
 awhile,

And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to  
 raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the  
 praise

I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man patient there,

And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was  
 'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees

Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots  
 which please

To enircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know

If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but  
 slow

Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care

Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my  
 hair

The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with  
 kind power—

All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.

Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinised mine—

And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?

I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,

I would add to that life of the past, both the future and this.

I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,

At this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dis-  
 pense!"

#### XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more!  
 out-broke—

"I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I spoke!

I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain  
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him  
again

His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as I saw.

I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law !  
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked  
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was  
asked.

Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at wisdom laid bare.  
Have I forethought ? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite  
care !

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success ?

I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,  
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God  
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.  
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew  
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)  
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-Complete,  
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet !  
Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known,  
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.  
There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,  
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)  
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst  
E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold ! I could love if I durst !  
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake  
God's own speed in the one way of love : I abstain, for love's  
sake !

—What, my soul ? see thus far and no farther ? when doors  
great and small,  
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth  
appal ?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all ?  
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,  
That I doubt his own love can compete with it ? here, the parts  
shift ?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what Began ?—  
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man.  
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone  
can ?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less  
power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower  
Of the life he was gifted and filled with ? to make such a soul,  
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole ?  
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)  
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the  
best ?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height  
This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute  
of night?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake, .  
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake  
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set  
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet  
To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!  
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the fest to make  
sure.

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,  
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggle in  
this.

## XVII.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive :  
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.  
All's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my  
prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.  
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread  
Sabaoth :

I will?—the mere atoms despise me ! and why am I loth  
To look that, even that in the face too ? why is it I dare  
Think but lightly of such impuissance ? what stops my despair ?  
This ;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what  
man Would do !

See the king—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall  
through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,  
To fill up his life, to starve my own out, I would—knowing  
which,

I know that my service is perfect.—Oh, speak through me  
now !

Would I suffer for him that I love ? So wilt Thou—so wilt  
Thou !

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost Crown—  
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down  
One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue with  
death !

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being beloved !  
He who did most, shall bear most ; the strongest shall stand  
the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my flesh, that I  
seek

In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be  
 A Face like my face that receives thee : a Man like to me,  
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever ! a Hand like this  
     hand  
 Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the Christ  
     stand ! ”

## XVIII.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.  
 There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,  
 Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive—the aware—  
 I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,  
 As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—  
 Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed  
     with her crews ;  
 And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot  
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I fainted  
     not.  
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported—  
     suppressed  
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,  
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.  
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—  
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth ;  
 In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills ;  
 In the shuddering forests' new awe ; in the sudden wind-thrills ;  
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with an eye  
     sidling still  
 Tho' averted, in wonder and dread ; and the birds stiff and  
     chill  
 That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with  
     awe !  
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new Law.  
 The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the  
     flowers ;  
 The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved the  
     vine-bowers.  
 And the little brooks witnessing, murmured, persistent and low,  
 With their obstinate, all but husned voices—E'en so ! it is so.

## “DE GUSTIBUS—”

### I.

**YOUR** ghost will walk, you lover or trees,  
 (If loves remain)  
 In an English lane,  
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.  
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—  
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,  
 Making love, say,—  
 The happier they !  
 Draw yourself up from the light of the moon  
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,  
 With the beantflowers' boon,  
 And the blackbird's tune,  
 And May, and June !

### II.

What I love best in all the world,  
 Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,  
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,  
 (If I get my head from out the mouth  
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
 And come again to the land of lands)—  
 In a sea-side house to the farther south,  
 Where the baked cicadas die of drouth,  
 And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,  
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-crusted,  
 My sentinel to guard the sands  
 To the water's edge. For, what expands  
 Without the house, but the great opaque  
 Blue breadth of sea, and not a break ?  
 While, in the house, for ever crumbles  
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
 A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles

Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
And says there's news to-day—the king  
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,  
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.  
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.

Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me—

(When fortune's malice

• Lost her, Calais.)

Open my heart and you will see

Graved inside of it, “Italy.”

Such lovers old are I and she;

So it always was, so it still shall be!

## WOMEN AND ROSES

### I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.  
And which of its roses three  
Is the dearest rose to me?

### II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow  
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go  
Floating the women faded for ages,  
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.  
Then follow the women fresh and gay,  
Living and loving and loved to-day  
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,  
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

### III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,  
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached  
Bees pass it unimpeached.

## IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,  
 You, great shapes of the antique time !  
 How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,  
 Break my heart at your feet to please you ?  
 Oh ! to possess, and be possessed !  
 Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !  
 But once of love, the poesy, the passion,  
 Drink once and die !—In vain, the same fashion  
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed ;  
 Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,  
 Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

## VI.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth  
 The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,  
 So will I bury me while burning,  
 Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,  
 Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !  
 Fold me fast where the cincture slips,  
 Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure !  
 Girdle me once ! But no—in their old measure  
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,  
 Thy bud's the babe unborn :  
 First streak of a new morn.

## VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !  
 What's far conquers what is near.  
 Roses will bloom nor want beholders,  
 Sprung from the dust where our own flesh moulders.  
 What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?  
 A novel grace and a beauty strange.  
 I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,  
 Shaped her to his mind !—Alas ! in like manner  
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## PROTUS.

---

Among these latter busts we count by scores,  
 Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,  
 Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,  
 Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast  
 One loves a baby face, with violets there,  
 Violets instead of laurel in the hair,  
 As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period  
 Of empery beginning with a god :  
 Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant ;  
 Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant.  
 And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire  
 Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.  
 A fame that he was missing, spread afar—  
 The world, from its four corners, rose in war,  
 Till he was borne out on a balcony  
 To pacify the world when it should see.  
 The captains ranged before him, one, his hand  
 Made baby points at, gained the chief command.  
 And day by day more beautiful he grew  
 In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,  
 While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child  
 Were, so, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.  
 Already sages laboured to condense  
 In easy tones a life's experience :  
 And artists took grave counsel to impart  
 In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art—  
 To make his graces prompt as blossoming  
 Of plentifully-watered palms in spring :  
 Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,  
 For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,  
 And mortals love the letters of his name."

—Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.  
 New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say  
 How that same year, on such a month and day,  
 "John the Pannonian, groundedly believed  
 A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved  
 The Empire from its fate the year before,—  
 Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore



The same for six years, (during which the Huns  
 Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons  
 Put something in his liquor"—and so forth.  
 Then a new reign. Stay—"Take at its just worth"  
 (Subjoins an annotator) "what I give"  
 . As hearsay. Some think John let Protus live  
 And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age  
 At some blind northern court; made first a page,  
 Then, tutor to the children—last, of use  
 About the hunting-stables. I deduce  
 He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,'  
 Whereof the name in sundry catalogues  
 Is extant yet. A Protus of the Race  
 Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace,—  
 And if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great eye  
 Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can  
 To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

---

## HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL  
 CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.

---

[“Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted, blind, restive and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now paternally brought—nay (for He saith, ‘Compel them to come in’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory.”—*Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.*]

Though what the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:

I.

FEE, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !  
 Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.  
 Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,  
 Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,  
 Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime  
 Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time.

II.

Boh, here's Barnabas ! Job, that's you ?  
 Up stumps Solomon—bustling too ?  
 Shame, man ! greedy beyond your years  
 To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears ?  
 Fair play's a jewel ! leave friends in the lurch ?  
 Stand on 'a line ere you start for the church.

III.

Higgledy-piggledy, packed we lie,  
 Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,  
 Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,  
 Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve,  
 Hist ! square shoulders, settle your thumbs  
 And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

IV.

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog !  
 I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.  
 What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,  
 To help and handle my lord's hour-glass !  
 Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?  
 His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

V.

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch,  
 Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch !  
 Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,  
 And the gown with the angel and thingumbob.  
 What's he at, quotha ? reading his text !  
 Now you've his curtsey—and what comes next ?

## VI.

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—  
No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen !  
You five that were thieves, deserve it fairly ;  
You seven that were beggars, will live less sparsely ;  
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,  
Got fortune—and fortune gets you ; mind that !

## VII.

Give your first groan—compunction's at work ;  
And soft ! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.  
Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin  
He was four times already converted in !  
Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—  
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face. \*

## VIII.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at ?  
I know a point where his text falls pat.  
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now  
Went to my heart and made me vow  
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—  
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

## IX.

Groan altogether now, whee—hee—hee !  
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me !  
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,  
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist ;  
Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well spent  
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

## X.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,  
Yelled, pricked us out to this church like hounds.  
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed  
Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed.  
And it overflows, when, to even the odd,  
Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

## XI.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,  
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,  
Since forced to muse the appointed time  
On those precious facts and truths sublime,—  
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,  
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

## XII.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,  
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,  
And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange.  
Something is wrong, there needeth a change.  
But what, or, where? at the last, or first?  
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

## XIII.

'The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,  
And again in his border see Israel set.  
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,  
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :  
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.  
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

## XIV.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race  
Shall carry and bring them to their place :  
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,  
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,  
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er  
The oppressor triumph for evermore ?

## XV.

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep :  
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep  
'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,  
Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.  
By his servant Moses the watch was set :  
Though near upon cock-crow —we keep it yet.

## XVI.

"Thou! if thou wast. He, who at mid-watch came,  
By the starlight naming a dubious Name!  
And if we were too heavy with sleep—too rash  
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gas!  
Fell on thee coming to take thine own,  
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

## XVII.

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.  
But, the judgment over, join sides with us!  
Thine too is the cause! and not more thine  
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,  
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,  
Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed!

## XVIII.

"We withstood Christ then? be mindful how  
At least we withstand Barabbas now!  
Was our outrage sore? but the worst we spared,  
To have called these—Christians,—had we dared!  
Let defiance to them, pay mistrust of thee,  
And Rome make amends for Calvary!

## XIX.

"By the torture, prolonged from age to age,  
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,  
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,  
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,  
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,  
And the summons to Christian fellowship,

## XX.

"We boast our proofs, that at least the Jew  
Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.  
Thy face took never so deep a shade  
But we fought them in it, God our aid!  
A trophy to bear, as we march, a band  
South, east, and on to the Pleasant Land!"

[*The present Pope abolished this bad business of the  
sermon.—R. B.*]

## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL :

A PICTURE AT FANO.

## I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave  
 That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !  
 Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
 Shall find performed thy special ministry  
 And time come for departure, thou, suspending  
 Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,  
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

## II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,  
 From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,  
 And suddenly my head be covered o'er  
 With those wings, white above the child who prays  
 Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding  
 Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding  
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door !

## III.

I would not look up thither past thy head  
 Because the door opes, like that child, I know,  
 For I should have thy gracious face instead,  
 Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low  
 Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,  
 And lift them up to pray, and gently tether  
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments spread ?

## IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest  
 My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands  
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,  
 Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,  
 Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
 Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,  
 And all lay quiet, happy and suppress.

## V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !  
 I think how I should view the earth and skies  
 And sea, when once again my brow was bared  
 After thy healing, with such different eyes.  
 O world, as God has made it ! all is beauty :  
 And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.  
 What further may be sought for or declared ?

## VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
 (Alfred, dear friend) that little child to pray,  
 Holding the little hands up, each to each  
 Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away  
 Over the earth where so much lay before him  
 Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,  
 And he was left at Fano by the beach.

## VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
 To sit and see him in his chapel there,  
 And drink his beauty to our soul's content  
 —My angel with me too : and since I care  
 For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power  
 And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

## VIII.

And since he did not work so earnestly  
 At all times, and has else endured some wrong,—  
 I took one thought his picture struck from me,  
 And spread it out, translating it to song.  
 My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?  
 How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?  
 This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

## CLEON.

‘As certain also of your own poets have said’—

---

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,  
 Lily on lily, that o’erlace the sea,  
 And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps  
 “Greece”)—  
 To Protos in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :  
 I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.  
 The master of thy galley still unlades  
 Gift after gift ; they block my court at last  
 And pile themselves along its portico  
 Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :  
 And one white she-slave from the group dispersed  
 Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work  
 Pavement, at once my nation’s work and gift,  
 Now covered with this settle-down of doves)  
 One lyric woman, in her crocus vest  
 Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands  
 Commends to me the strainer and the cup  
 Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !  
 For so shall men remark, in such an act  
 Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,  
 Thy recognition of the use of life ;  
 Nor call thy spirit barely adequate  
 To help on life in straight ways, broad enough  
 For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.  
 Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,  
 Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,  
 Or through dim hulls of unapparent growth,  
 Or when the general work ’mid good acclaim  
 Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,  
 Didst ne’er engage in work for mere work’s sake—  
 Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope  
 Of some eventual rest a-top of it,  
 Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,  
 Thou first of men mightst look out to the east.



The vulgar saw thy tower; thou sawest the sun.  
 For this, I promise on thy festival  
 To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,  
 Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak  
 Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—  
 Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most  
 Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.  
 It is as thou hast heard: in one short life  
 I, Cleon, have effected all those things  
 Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.  
 That epos on thy hundred plates of gold  
 Is mine,—and also mine the little chaunt,  
 So sure to rise from every fishing-bark  
 When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets.  
 The image of the sun-god on the phare  
 Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine.  
 The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,  
 As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.  
 I know the true proportions of a man  
 And woman also, not observed before;  
 And I have written three books on the soul,  
 Proving absurd all written hitherto,  
 And putting us to ignorance again.  
 For music,—why, I have combined the moods,  
 Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;  
 Thus much the people know and recognise,  
 Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.  
 We of these latter days, with greater mind  
 Than our forerunners, since more composite,  
 Look not so great (beside their simple way)  
 To a judge who only sees one way at once,  
 One mind-point, and no other at a time,—  
 Compares the small part of a man of us  
 With some whole man of the heroic age,  
 Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for ours,  
 And ours is greater, had we skill to know.  
 Yet, what we call this life of men on earth.  
 This sequence of the soul's achievements here,  
 Being, as I find much reason to conceive,  
 Intended to be viewed eventually  
 As a great whole, not analysed to parts,  
 But each part having reference to all,—  
 How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,  
 Endure effacement by another part?  
 Was the thing done?—Then what's to do again?  
 See, in the chequered pavement opposite,

Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,  
 And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—  
 He did not overlay them, superimpose  
 The new upon the old and blot it out  
 But laid them on a level in his work,  
 Making at last a picture; there it lies.  
 So, first the perfect separate forms were made,  
 The portions of mankind—and after, so,  
 Occurred the combination of the same.  
 Or where had been a progress, otherwise?  
 Mankind, made up of all the single men,—  
 In such a synthesis the labour ends.  
 Now, mark me—those divine men of old time  
 Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point  
 The outside verge that rounds our faculty;  
 And where they reached, who can do more than reach?  
 It takes but little water just to touch  
 At some one point the inside of a sphere,  
 And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest  
 In due succession: but the finer air  
 Which not so palpably nor obviously,  
 Though no less universally, can touch  
 The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,  
 Fills it more fully than the water did;  
 Holds thrice the weight of water in itself  
 Resolved into a subtler element.  
 And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full  
 Up to the visible height—and after, void;  
 Not knowing air's more hidden properties.  
 And thus our soul, unknown, cries out to Zeus  
 To vindicate his purpose in its life—  
 Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?  
 Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,  
 That he or other God, descended here  
 And, once for all, showed simultaneously  
 What, in its nature, never can be shown  
 Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say,  
 The worth both absolute and relative  
 Of all His children from the birth of time,  
 His instruments for all appointed work.  
 I now go on to image,—might we hear  
 The judgment which should give the due to each,  
 Show where the labour lay and where the ease,  
 And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere!  
 This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,  
 That years and days, the summers and the springs  
 Follow each other with unwaning powers—  
 The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far

Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;  
 The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;  
 The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;  
 The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers :  
 That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,  
 Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,  
 Refines upon the women of my youth.  
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates ?  
 I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—  
 Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved  
 And painted men like Phidias and his friend :  
 I am not great as they are, point by point :  
 But I have entered into sympathy  
 With these four, running these into one soul,  
 Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.  
 Say, is it nothing that I know them all ?  
 The wild flower was the larger—I have dashed  
 Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's  
 Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,  
 And show a better flower if not so large.  
 I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods  
 Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare  
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext  
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,  
 Discourse of lightly or depreciate ?  
 It might have fallen to another's hand—what then ?  
 I pass too surely—let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.  
 This being with me as I declare, O king,  
 My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,  
 So done by me, accepted so by men—  
 Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)  
 I must not be accounted to attain  
 The very crown and proper end of life.  
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,  
 I face death with success in my right hand :  
 Whether I fear death less than dost thyself  
 The fortunate of men. "For" (writest thou)  
 "Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought :  
 Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,  
 The pictures men shall study ; while my life,  
 Complete and whole now in its power and joy,  
 Dies altogether with my brain and arm  
 Is lost indeed ; since,—what survives myself ?  
 The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,  
 Set on the promontory which I named.  
 And that—some supple courtier of my heir

Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,  
To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.  
I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go ! ”

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.  
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse  
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,  
That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?  
That imperfection means perfection hid,  
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time ?  
If, in the morning of philosophy,  
Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived,  
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked  
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,  
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—  
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced  
The perfectness of others yet unseen.  
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee  
“ Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,  
Do more for visible creatures than is done ? ”  
Thou wouldst have answered, “ Ay, by making each  
Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.  
All's perfect else : the shell sucks fast the rock,  
The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims  
And slides ; the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,  
Till life's mechanics can no further go—  
And all this joy in natural life, is put,  
Like fire from off Thy finger into each,  
So exquisitely perfect is the same.  
But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are ;  
It has them, not they it : and so I choose,  
For man, Thy last premeditated work  
(If I might add a glory to this scheme)  
That a third thing should stand apart from both,  
A quality arise within the soul,  
Which, intro-active, made to supervise  
And feel the force it has, may view itself,  
And so be happy.” Man might live at first  
The animal life : but is there nothing more ?  
In due time, let him critically learn  
How he lives ; and, the more he gets to know  
Of his own life's adaptabilities,  
The more joy-giving will his life become.  
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :  
“ Let progress end at once,—man make no step  
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,  
Using his senses, not the sense of sense.”

In man there's failure, only since he left  
The lower and unconscious forms of life.  
We called it an advance, the rendering plain  
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,  
And, by new lore so added to the old,  
Take each step higher over the brute's head.  
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,  
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,  
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life  
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to ;  
A tower that crowns a country. But, alas !  
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,  
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—  
We know this, which we had not else perceived)  
That there's a world of capability  
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,  
Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,  
And still the flesh replies, " Take no jot more  
Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad !  
Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought  
Deduction to it." We struggle—fain to enlarge  
Our bounded physical reciprocity,  
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,  
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,  
It skills not : life's inadequate to joy,  
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.  
They praise a fountain in my garden here  
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt  
Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.  
What if I told her, it is just a thread  
From that great river which the hills shut up,  
And mock her with my leave to take the same ?  
The artificer has given her one small tube  
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots  
To know she might spout oceans if she could ?  
She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread.  
And so a man can use but a man's joy  
While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast  
" See, man, how happy I live, and despair—  
That I may be still happier—for thy use ! "  
If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,  
As hearts beat on to doing : 'tis not so—  
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness ?  
Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—  
And get no answer : and agree in sum,  
O king, with thy profound discouragement,  
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.  
Most progress is most failure ! thou sayest well

The last point now :—thou dost except a case—  
 Holding joy not impossible to one  
 With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—  
 Who leave behind me living works indeed ;  
 For, such a poem, such a painting lives.  
 What ? dost thou verily trip upon a word,  
 Confound the accurate view of what joy is  
 (Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)  
 With feeling joy ? confound the knowing how  
 And showing how to live (my faculty)  
 With actually living ?—Otherwise  
 Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king ?  
 Because in my great epos I display  
 How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—  
 Is this as though I acted ? if I paint,  
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young ?  
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself  
 The many years of pain that taught me art !  
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove  
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more :  
 But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.  
 Yon rower with the moulded muscles there  
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.  
 I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's an ode.  
 I get to sing of love, when grown too grey  
 For being beloved : she turns to that young man  
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.  
 I know the joy of kingship : well—thou art king !

“ But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,  
 To find thee tripping on a mere word) “ what  
 Thou writest, paintest, stays : that does not die :  
 Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,  
 And Æschylus, because we read his plays ! ”  
 Why, if they live still, let them come and take  
 Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy cup—  
 Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive ?  
 Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,—  
 In this, that every day my sense of joy  
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
 In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen ;  
 While every day my hairs fall more and more,  
 My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—  
 The horror quickening still from year to year,  
 The consummation coming past escape  
 When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—  
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,  
 Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,

Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,  
 I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,  
 The man who loved his life so over much,  
 Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
 I dare at times imagine to my need  
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,  
 Unlimited in capability  
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,  
 To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.  
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait  
 On purpose to make sweet the life at large—  
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death  
 We burst there as the worm into the fly,  
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But, no!  
 Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas!  
 He must have done so—were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,  
 Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest,  
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright  
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine  
 To one called Paulus—we have heard his fame  
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—  
 I know not, nor am troubled much to know.  
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,  
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,  
 Hath access to a secret shut from us?  
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,  
 In stooping to inquire of such an one.  
 As if his answer could impose at all.  
 He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.  
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves  
 Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;  
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)  
 Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

---

## THE TWINS.

“Give” and “It-shall-be-given-unto you.”

---

### I.

GRAND rough old Martin Luther  
 Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,  
 The better the uncouth:  
 Do roses stick like burrs?

## II.

A beggar asked an alms  
One day at an abbey-door,  
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms  
The Abbot replied, "We're poor!"

## III.

"Poor, who had plenty once,  
"When gifts fell thick as rain:  
"But they give us nought, for the nonce,  
"And how should we give again?"

## IV.

Then the beggar, "See your sins!  
"Of old, unless I err,  
"Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,  
"Date and Dabitur."

## V.

"While Date was in good case  
"Dabitur flourished too:  
"For Dabitur's lenten face,  
"No wonder if Date rue."

## VI.

"Would ye retrieve the one?  
"Try and make plump the other!  
"When Date's penance is done,  
"Dabitur helps his brother."

## VII.

"Only, beware relapse!"  
The Abbot hung his head.  
This beggar might be, perhaps,  
An angel, Luther said.



## POPULARITY.

## I.

STAND still, true poet that you are,  
 I know you ; let me try and draw you.  
 Some night you'll fail us. When afar  
 You rise, remember one man saw you,  
 Knew you, and named a star.

## II.

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend  
 That loving hand of His which leads you,  
 Yet locks you safe from end to end  
 Of this dark world, unless He needs you—  
 Just saves your light to spend ?

## III.

His clenched Hand shall uncloze at last  
 I know, and let out all the beauty.  
 My poet holds the future fast,  
 Accepts the coming ages' duty,  
 Their present for this past.

## IV.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow  
 Shall clear, to God the chalice raising ;  
 " Others give best at first, but Thou  
 For ever set'st our table praising,—  
 Keep'st the good wine till now."

## V.

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,  
 With few or none to watch and wonder.  
 I'll say—a fisher (on the sand  
 By 'Tyre the Old) his ocean-plunder,  
 A netful, brought to land.

## VI.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells  
 Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes  
 Whereof one drop worked miracles,  
 And coloured like Astarte's eyes  
 Raw silk the merchant sells ?

## VII.

And each bystander of them all  
 Could criticise, and quote tradition  
 How depths of blue sublimed some pall,  
 To get which, pricked a king's ambition ;  
 Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

## VIII.

Yet there's the dye,—in that rough mesh,  
 The sea has only just o'er-whispered !  
 Live whelks, the lip's-beard dripping fresh,  
 As if they still the water's lisp heard  
 Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

## IX.

Enough to furnish Solomon  
 Such hangings for his cedar-house,  
 That when gold-robed he took the throne  
 In that abyss of blue, the Spouse  
 Might swear his presence shone

## X.

Most like the centre-spike of gold  
 Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,  
 What time, with ardours manifold,  
 The bee goes singing to her groom,  
 Drunken and overbold.

## XI.

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !  
 Till art comes,—comes to pound and squeeze  
 And clarify,—refines to proof  
 The liquor filtered by degrees.  
 While the world stands aloof.

## XII.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,  
 And priced, and saleable at last !  
 And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine  
 To paint the future from the past,  
 Put blue into their line.

## XIII.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats.  
 Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup.  
 Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—  
 Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?  
 What porridge had John Keats?

## THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

## A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

(*In the original*) ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A  
 CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF  
 SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE,  
*Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE  
 AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du  
 Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction  
 from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of  
 centuries.—R. B.)

## I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

THE Lord, we look to once for all,  
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:  
 He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,  
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce  
 See Him no other than as he is;  
 Give both the Infinites their due—  
 Infinite mercy, but, I wis,  
 As infinite a justice too.  
 [Organ: *plagal-cadence*.  
 As infinite a justice too.

## II.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,  
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,  
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,  
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin—

Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,  
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,  
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,  
 They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye  
 shall say to confirm him who singeth—*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

## III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;  
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;  
 But first they set divers tunbrils a-tilt,  
 Make a trench all round with the city muck;  
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store;  
 Faggots not few, blocks great and small.  
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—  
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

## CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

## IV.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;  
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow;  
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;  
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:  
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,  
 Sling him fast like a hog to seorch,  
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,  
 Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

## CHORUS.

*Laus Deo*—who bids clap-to the torch.

## V.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,  
 Is burning alive in Paris square!  
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?  
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?  
 Or heave his chest, while a band goes round?  
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?  
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?  
 —Thinks John—I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself.*

## ‘VI.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,  
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;  
 To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.  
*(Salva reverentia.)*  
 Now it was, “Saviour, bountiful lamb,  
 I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me.  
 See thy servant, the plight wherein I am !  
 Art thou a Saviour? Save thou me !”

## CHORUS.

’Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me !

## VII.

Who maketh God’s menace an idle word ?  
 —Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,  
 Than a damsel’s threat to her wanton bird ?—  
 For she too prattles of ugly names.  
 —Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows  
 That God is good and the rest is breath ;  
 Why else is the same styled, Sharon’s rose ?  
 Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

## CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith !

## VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John !  
 Some, honied of taste like your leman’s tongue.  
 Some, bitter—for why ? (roast gaily on !)  
 Their tree struck root in devil’s dung !  
 When Paul once reasoned of righteousness  
 And of temperance and of judgment to come,  
 Good Felix trembled, he could no less—  
 John, snickering, crook’d his wicked thumb ?

## CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb ?

## IX.

Hia ha, John plucks now at his rose  
 To rid himself of a sorrow at heart !  
 Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays uncloze ;  
 Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart ;

And with blood for dew, thè bosom boils ;  
 And a gust of sulphur is all its smell  
 And lo, he is horribly in the toils  
 Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell !

## CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

## X.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,  
 On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—  
 To the Person, he bought and sold again—  
 For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—  
 Feature by feature It took its place !  
 And his voice like a mad dog's choking bark  
 At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face—  
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark

## SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark !

## TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

## I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day  
 As I have felt, since, hand in hand,  
 We sat down on the grass, to stray  
 In spirit better through the land,  
 This morn of Rodie and May ?

## II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
 Has tantalised me many times,  
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes  
 To catch at and let go.

## "III.

Help me to hold it : first it left  
 The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
 There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,  
 Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed  
 Took up the floating weft,

## IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed  
 Five beetles,—blind and green they grope  
 Among the honey-meal,—and last  
 Everywhere on the grassy slope  
 I traced it. Hold it fast !

## V.

The champaign with its endless fleece  
 Of feathery grasses everywhere !  
 Silence and passion, joy and peace,  
 An everlasting wash of air—  
 Rome's ghost since her decease.

## VI.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,  
 Such miracles performed in play,  
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
 Such letting Nature have her way  
 While Heaven looks from its towers.

## VII.

How say you ? Let us, O my dove,  
 Let us be unashamed of soul,  
 As earth lies bare to heaven above.  
 How is it under our control  
 To love or not to love ?

## VIII.

I would that you were all to me,  
 You that are just so much, no more—  
 Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free !  
 Where does the fault lie ? what the core  
 Of the wound, since wound must be ?

## IX.

I would I could adopt your will,  
 See with your eyes, and set my heart  
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill  
 At your soul's springs,—your part, my part  
 In life, for good and ill.

## X.

No. I yearn upward—touch you close,  
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,  
 Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose  
 And love it more than tongue can speak—  
 Then the good minute goes.

## XI.

Already how am I so far  
 Out of that minute? Must I go  
 Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,  
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,  
 Fixed by no friendly star?

## XII.

Just when I seemed about to learn!  
 Where is the thread now? Off again!  
 The old trick! Only I discern—  
 Infinite passion and the pain  
 Of finite hearts that yearn.

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

[Time—Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,  
 Singing together.  
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,  
 Each in its tether



Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,  
     Cared-for till cock-crow.  
 Look out if yonder's not the day again  
     Rinming the rock-row !  
 That's the appropriate country—there, man's thought,  
     Rarer, intenser,  
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
     Chafes in the censer !  
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;  
     Seek we sepulture  
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top,  
     Crowded with culture !  
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;  
     Clouds overcome it ;  
 No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
     Circling its summit !  
 Thither our path lies—wind we up the heights—  
     Wait ye the warning ?  
 Our low life was the level's and the night's ;  
     He's for the morning !  
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,  
     'Ware the beholders !  
 This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,  
     Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,  
     Safe from the weather !  
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,  
     Singing together,  
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,  
     Lyric Apollo !  
 Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note  
     Winter would follow ?  
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !  
     Cramped and diminished,  
 Moaned he, " New measures, other feet anon !  
     My dance is finished ! "  
 No, that's the world's way ! (keep the mountain-side,  
     Make for the city.)  
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride  
     Over men's pity ;  
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world  
     Bent on escaping :  
 " What's in the scroll," quoth he, " thou keepest furled ?  
     Show me their shaping,  
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage,  
     Give ! "—So he gowned him,  
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page :  
     Learned, we found him !

Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes like lead,  
 Accents uncertain :  
 “ Time to taste life,” another would have said,  
 • “ Up with the curtain ! ”  
 This man said rather, “ Actual life comes next ?  
 Patience a moment !  
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,  
 Still, there's the comment.  
 Let me know all. Prate not of most or least,  
 Painful or easy :  
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,  
 Ay, nor feel queasy ! ”  
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,  
 When he had learned it,  
 When he had gathered all books had to give ;  
 Sooner, he spurned it !  
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—  
 Fancy the fabric  
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,  
 Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here's the town-gate reached : there's the market-place  
 Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace  
 (Hearten our chorus)

Still before living he'd learn how to live—  
 No end to learning.

Earn the means first—God surely will contrive  
 Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say---“ But time escapes,—  
 “ Live now or never ! ”

He said, “ What's Time ? leave Now for dogs and apes !  
 Man has For ever.”

Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head ;  
*Calculus* racked him :

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead ;  
*Tussis* attacked him.

“ Now, Master, take a little rest ! ”—not he !  
 (Caution redoubled !

Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)  
 Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,  
 Fierce as a dragon

He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)  
 Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
 Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,  
 Bad is our bargain !

Was it not great ? did not he throw on God,  
 (He loves the burthen)—  
 God's task to make the heavenly period  
 Perfect the earthen ?  
 Did not he magnify the mind, show clear  
 Just what it all meant ?  
 He would not discount life, as fools do here,  
 Paid by instalment !  
 He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success  
 Found, or earth's failure :  
 " Wilt thou trust death or not ? " he answered " Yes.  
 " Hence with life's pale lure ! "  
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
 Sees it and does it :  
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue  
 Dies ere he knows it.  
 That low man goes on adding one to one,  
 His hundred's soon hit :  
 This high man, aiming at a million,  
 Misses an unit.  
 That, has the world here—should he need the next,  
 Let the world mind him !  
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
 Seeking shall find Him.  
 So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,  
 Ground he at grammar ;  
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife.  
 While he could stammer  
 He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be !—  
 Properly based *Oun*—  
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,  
 Dead from the waist down.  
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.  
 Hail to your purlieus  
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
 Swallows and curlews !  
 Here's the top-peak ! the multitude below  
 Live, for they can there.  
 This man decided not to Live but Know—  
 Bury this man there ?  
 Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,  
 Lightnings are loosened,  
 Stars come and go ! let joy break with the storm—  
 Peace let the dew send !  
 Lofty designs must close in like effects :  
 Loftily lying,  
 Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects  
 Living and dying.

## ONE WAY OF LOVE.

## I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
 Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves,  
 And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
 She will not turn aside? Alas!  
 Let them lie. Suppose they die?  
 The chance was they might take her eye.

## II.

How many a month I strove to suit  
 These stubborn fingers to the lute!  
 To-day I venture all I know.  
 She will not hear my music? So!  
 Break the string—fold music's wing.  
 Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

## III.

My whole life long I learned to love.  
 This hour my utmost art I prove  
 And speak my passion.—Heaven or hell?  
 She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!  
 Lose who may—I still can say,  
 Those who win heaven, blest are they.

## ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

## I.

JUNE was not over,  
 Though past the full  
 And the best of her roses  
 Had yet to blow,  
 When a man I know  
 (But shall not discover,  
 Since ears are dull,  
 And time discloses)  
 Turned him and said with a man's true air,  
 Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—  
 "If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

## II.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!  
 True, serene deadness  
 Tries a man's temper.  
 What's in the blossom  
 June wears on her bosom?  
 Can it clear scores with you?  
 Sweetness and redness,  
*Eadem semper!*  
 Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!  
 If June mends her bowers now, your hand left unsightly  
 By plucking their roses,—my June will do rightly.

## III.

And after, for pastime,  
 If June be refulgent  
 With flowers in completeness,  
 All petals, no prickles,  
 Delicious as trickles  
 Of wine poured at mass-time,—  
 And choose One indulgent  
 To redness and sweetness:  
 Or if, with experience of man and of spider,  
 She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-riddler,  
 To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will consider.

## “ TRANSCENDENTALISM : ”

A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS.

---

STOP playing, poet ! may a brother speak ?  
 'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art :  
 Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts  
 Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.  
 —True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up !  
 But why such long prolusion and display,  
 Such turning and adjustment of the harp,  
 And taking it upon your breast at length,  
 Only to speak dry words across its strings ?  
 Stark-naked thought is in request enough—  
 Speak prose and holloa it till Europe hears !  
 The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,  
 Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—  
 Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you ?

But here's your fault ; grown men want thought, you think  
 Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse :  
 Boys seek for images and melody,  
 Men must have reason—so you aim at men.  
 Quite otherwise ! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true  
 We see and hear and do not wonder much.  
 If you could tell us what they mean, indeed !  
 As Swedish Bælhne never cared for plants  
 Until it happened, a-walking in the fields,  
 He noticed all at once that plants could speak,  
 Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.  
 That day the daisy had an eye indeed—  
 Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes !  
 We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.  
 But by the time youth slips a stage or two  
 While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,  
 (Collating, and emendating the same  
 And settling on the sense most to our mind)  
 We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.  
 Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—  
 Another Bælhne with a tougher book  
 And subtler meanings of what roses say,—

Or some stout Mage like him of Hälberstadt,  
 John, who made things Böhme wrote thoughts about ?  
 He with a "look you !" vents a brace of rhymes,  
 And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,  
 Over us, under, round us every side, '—  
 Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs  
 And musty volumes, Böhme's book and all,—  
 Buries us with a glory, young once more,  
 Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again !  
 You are a poem, though your poem's naught.  
 The best of all you did before, believe,  
 Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer chords  
 Bent, following the cherub at the top  
 That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

## MISCONCEPTIONS.

### I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,  
 Making it blossom with pleasure,  
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.  
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure  
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—  
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to !

### II.

THIS is a heart the Queen leant on,  
 Thrilled in a minute erratic,  
 Ere the true bosom she bent on,  
 Meet for love's regal dalmatic.  
 Oh, what a fancy ecstatic  
 Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—  
 Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on !

## ONE WORD MORE.

TO E. B. B.

---

### I.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women  
 Naming me the fifty poems finished !  
 Take them, Love, the book and me together.  
 Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

### II.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,  
 Made and wrote them in a certain volume  
 Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil,  
 Else he only used to draw Madonnas :  
 These, the world might view—but One, the volume.  
 Who that one, you ask ? Your heart instructs you.  
 Did she live and love it all her life-time ?  
 Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,  
 Die, and let it drop beside her pillow  
 Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,  
 Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving--  
 Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,  
 Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's ?

### III.

You and I would rather read that volume,  
 (Taken to his beating bosom by it)  
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,  
 Would we not ? than wonder at Madonnas—  
 Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,  
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,  
 Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—  
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.



## IV.

You and I will never read that volume.  
 Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple  
 Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.  
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna  
 Cried, and the world with it, "Ours—the treasure !"  
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

## V.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel :  
 Whom to please ? You whisper " Beatrice."  
 While he mused and traced it and retraced it,  
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded  
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,  
 When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,  
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,  
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,  
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,  
 Let the wretch go festering thro' Florence)—  
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,  
 Hated wickedness that hinders loving,  
 Dante standing, studying his angel,—  
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno.  
 Says he—" Certain people of importance "  
 Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)  
 Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet.  
 Says the poet—" Then I stopped my painting."

## VI.

You and I would rather see that angel,  
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,  
 Would we not ?—than read a fresh Inferno.

## VII.

You and I will never see that picture.  
 While he mused on love and Beatrice,  
 While he softened o'er his outlined angel,  
 In they broke, those " people of importance :"  
 We and Bice bear the loss forever.

## VIII.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture ?

## IX.

This : no artist lives and loves that longs not  
 Once and only once, and for One only,  
 (Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language  
 Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—  
 Using nature that's an art to others,  
 Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.  
 Ay, of all the artists living, loving.  
 None but would forego his proper dowry,—  
 Does he paint ? he fain would write a poem,—  
 Does he write ? he fain would paint a picture,  
 Put to proof art alien to the artist's,  
 Once, and only once, and for One only,  
 So to be the man and leave the artist,  
 Save the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

## X.

Wherefore ? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement !  
 He who smites the rock and spreads the water,  
 Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,  
 Even he, the minute makes immortal.  
 Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,  
 Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.  
 While he smites, how can he but remember,  
 So he smote before, in such a peril,  
 When they stood and mocked—" Shall smiting help us ?"  
 When they drank and sneered—" A stroke is easy !"  
 When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,  
 Throwing him for thanks—" But drought was pleasant."  
 Thus old memories mar the actual triumph ;  
 Thus the doing savours of disrelish ;  
 Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat ;  
 O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,  
 Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.  
 For he bears an ancient wrong about him,  
 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,  
 Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—  
 " How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us ? "  
 Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—  
 " Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

## XI.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant !  
 Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,  
 Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.  
 Never dares the man put off the prophet.

## XII.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,  
 (Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,  
 Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)  
 He would envy yon dumb patient camel,  
 Keeping a reserve of scanty water  
 Meant to save his own life in the desert ;  
 Ready in the desert to deliver  
 (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)  
 Hoard and life together for his mistress.

## XIII.

I shall never, in the years remaining,  
 Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues  
 Make you music that should all-express me ;  
 So it seems : I stand on my attainment.  
 This of verse alone, one life allows me ;  
 Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
 Other heights in other lives, God willing—  
 All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love :

## XIV.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—  
 Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seized it.  
 Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,  
 Lines I write the first time and the last time.  
 He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,  
 Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,  
 Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,  
 Makes a strange art of an art familiar,  
 Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.  
 He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver  
 Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.  
 He who writes. may write for once, as I do.

## xv.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,  
 Enter each and all, and use their service,  
 Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.  
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:  
 I and mine and yours—the rest be all men's,  
 Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.  
 Let me speak this once in my true person,  
 Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,  
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—  
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,  
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished;  
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!  
 Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

## xvi.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!  
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence,  
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.  
 Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,  
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,  
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.  
 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,  
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,  
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.  
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,  
 Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,  
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,  
 Goes dispiritedly,—glad to finish.

## xvii.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy?  
 Nay—for if that moon could love a mortal,  
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)  
 All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)  
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,  
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—  
 Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,  
 Blind to Galileo on his turret,  
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!  
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—  
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,  
 Opens out anew for worse or better?

Proves she like some portent of an ice-berg  
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders,  
 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered chrystals?  
 Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire  
 Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?  
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu  
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,  
 Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.  
 Like the bodied heaven in his clearness  
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,  
 When they ate and drank and saw God also!

## XVIII.

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.  
 Only this is sure—the sight were other,  
 Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,  
 Dying now impoverished here in London.  
 God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures  
 Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,  
 One to show a woman when he loves her.

## XIX.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!  
 This to you—yourself my moon of poets!  
 Ah, but that's the world's side—there's the wonder—  
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.  
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you,  
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.  
 But the best is when I glide from out them,  
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,  
 Come out on the other side, the novel  
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,  
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

## XX.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,  
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,  
 Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,  
 Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!





